

King receives foreign cables

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Monday received a cable from Bahrain's chief of the National Guard, Brigadier Mohammad Ben Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifeh, who congratulated the King upon the assumption of his constitutional duties. In his message, the official wished health and success to the King in order to continue Jordan's progress and prosperity. King Abdullah also received a similar cable from Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel, who expressed confidence that the King's leadership will achieve the best for Jordan. King Abdullah received cables of condolence on the passing of King Hussein from the president of Mozambique, the secretary general of the Arab Historians Union, Jassem Mashhadani, and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

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King sends condolences to Bahraini leader

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Monday sent a cable of condolences to Bahraini leader Sheikh Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifeh over the death of former Bahraini Information Minister Tareq Abdul Rahman Al Muayyad.

Polish police seize Semtex haul

WARSAW (AFP) — Polish police have seized 25 kilos of Semtex explosive, enough to make "at least 100 powerful bombs," a police statement Monday said. Five people — four Poles and a Slovak national — were arrested in the Polish cities of Lodz and Warsaw, it said. The statement said the operation began in the middle of January, but did not say when the arrests took place.

Italian police seize arms stock

UDINE (AP) — Police seized dozens of grenades and arrested three Croats as alleged members of an arms-smuggling ring, Italian news reports said. The explosives are the same type that in December killed three Udrine policemen at the scene of a store whose burglar alarm had sounded. Authorities believed the ring smuggles Croatian arms to Italian and Albanian mobsters in Italy. Six Albanians were also reported detained.

Cameraman arrested for links with Israel

BEIRUT (AFP) — A Lebanese television cameraman reportedly kidnapped in southern Beirut last week had actually been arrested on charges of collaboration with Israel, officials said Monday. Mahmoud Jallul, who works for the official Tele-Liban station, was arrested Thursday accused of links with Israel's Mossad spy agency and is due to be referred to the military examining magistrate, they said. Jallul's wife had told police that her husband was beaten up and taken to an unknown destination after his car collided with another vehicle on Thursday.

Jail break in Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Eight prisoners, six of them awaiting execution, have broken out of a prison in southern Iran, a Tehran newspaper reported Monday. The breakout happened at the Firuzabad prison in the southern province of Fars, the Sobh-e-Emruz newspaper said without specifying when. The six prisoners on death row, one of them an Afghan, were due to be hanged for murder, it said. Jailbreaks are a rarity in Iran, where the prison population numbers a little over 120,000 for a population of 60 million.

Cholera kills at least 60 in Somalia

MOGADISHU (AP) — Cholera is sweeping southern Somalia, where at least 60 deaths have been confirmed and doctors are struggling to treat hundreds of infected people, a hospital director said Monday. Many more were feared to have died in the drought-stricken countryside while trying to make it to the hospital in Bardera, about 420 kilometres southwest of the Somali capital, Mogadishu. Qasim Aden Egal, the hospital's director, said wards were overflowing with about 250 cholera patients arriving from rural areas and nearby refugee camps. At least 60 deaths were recorded as of Sunday night, he said.



Jordan, IMF close to agreement on new programme — official

By Ghadeer Taber

AMMAN — Jordan and the International Monetary Fund are close to finalising an agreement on a new three-year reform programme to help revive the recession-hit economy, said a senior IMF official Monday.

"Negotiations are not finished but they are at an advanced stage... we expect to be ready to disburse by the end of March," said IMF Deputy Managing Director Stanley Fischer. He said the programme would be presented to the IMF board of directors by March — the final step before a programme is initiated.

"We will do our part to help the country grow again... it has great potential," said Fischer, speaking at a press briefing at the home of Finance Minister Michel Marto after discussions with His Majesty King Abdullah and Jordanian officials.

He said Jordan can also tap into the IMF's compensatory

contingency fund facility (CCFF), which can come up with some quick financing in the form of an up front tranche in times of difficulty.

The IMF's current \$331 million loan programme with Amman expires this month. But after debt repayments, Jordan was left with only \$50 million, according to some estimates.

Economists said a new three-year IMF extended fund-facility would provide Jordan more than \$150 million annually and pave the way for Paris Club governments to reschedule the country's debts — \$6.8 billion or 91 per cent of the GDP.

The IMF plan would condition hundreds of millions of dollars of aid to economic reforms that would include trade and tax reforms and tariff reductions and set out new fiscal targets.

"Three years from now, we hope to see substantial privatisation operating much more efficiently, lower budget deficit,

inflation at a low level, four-five per cent growth rate, liberalised trade with Jordan injecting itself more into the world economy," Fischer said.

Turning to the \$1.2 billion budget of 1999, which forecasts a deficit of seven per cent of gross domestic product, Fischer described the deficit estimation as "rather large."

"We have much more confidence in this budget, which is inclusive [of all expenditures] and is a substantial correction over last year."

On the stability of the dinar, Fischer cited the growth of Jordan's foreign currency reserves from \$250 million four years ago to \$1.2 billion today as a stabilising factor.

"We have great confidence in the Central Bank's ability to maintain parity" of the fixed exchange rate to the dollar, he said. Last month some analysts worried that changes to Jordan's Royal line of succession would result in a run on foreign currencies. But banks and

money exchanges reported that transactions during the transition of power were not alarming.

Fischer said it was important for Jordan to move ahead with its much-delayed privatisation drive — a major component of the IMF's previous programme — which he described as "extremely important to convince the world of the seriousness of the reform programme."

"We discussed privatisation at all levels," he said. "I detected a clear sense that privatisation was a priority for the government and there was an understanding that if the private sector was going to play a role then privatisation had to move," he said. "Not privatising is bad, but promising to privatise and not doing it is worse," he said.

He would not provide details of the government's obligations under the new programme.

(Continued on page 2)

Senate remembers King Hussein, pledges allegiance to King Abdullah

AMMAN (Petra) — The Senate on Monday eulogised the late King Hussein with speeches, paying tribute to his leadership, his endeavours to serve the Jordanian people, and his relentless efforts to achieve peace.

One after the other, the 40 members of the Senate, who gathered in a special session dedicated to the memory of the late monarch, said the passing of King Hussein was a great loss not only to Jordan but to the whole Arab Nation and the world community, which paid him due respect during his life and in

his death.

The speakers also pledged allegiance to His Majesty King Abdullah, who they said will follow in King Hussein's footsteps and uphold the noble principles of the Great Arab Revolt to pursue the march towards progress and prosperity for the Kingdom.

At the outset of the session, Senate President Zeid Rifai asked that the senators stand in a minute of silence in memory of King Hussein and pray to God to bless his soul.

In his address to the ses-

sion, which was attended by Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh and Cabinet members, Rifai spoke of King Hussein's tolerance, courage, and justice, which marked his life.

Rifai said the late King and his achievements, which will remain alive in the memory and hearts of the Jordanian people, won the international community's respect and admiration, manifested in the great number of world leaders who converged on Amman to pay tribute and attend the funeral.

Rifai voiced the Senate's pledge of allegiance to King Abdullah and HRH Crown Prince Hamzah and expressed wishes for their continued success in the leadership of the Kingdom.

The prime minister echoed Rifai's words that the late King will remain alive in the Jordanian people's hearts and conscience. Tarawneh said the Jordanian people and government, who are overwhelmed with sorrow and grief over the great loss, pledge allegiance to King Abdullah and Crown Prince Hamzah.



His Majesty King Abdullah meets Monday with U.S. General Anthony Zinni, commander of the U.S. Central Command, at Raghadan Palace (Photo by Yusef 'Allan')

King receives House speaker, IMF official, U.S. general

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Monday received Lower House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali, who delivered a letter voicing the House's allegiance to the Hashemite Throne as expressed by deputies at a session Sunday.

The letter, signed by the House speaker, congratulated the King, wished him continued health and pledged full support for his leadership.

"The House reaffirms its firm stand behind King Abdullah in his leadership of the country and the Hashemite family's endeavours in advancing the status and the image of the nation and in further enhancing the noble values of justice, dignity and freedom," said the letter.

"The House, while imploring God to bless the late King Hussein's soul, voices the Jordanian peo-

ple's determination and resolve in upholding allegiance to the Hashemite family, backing King Abdullah's endeavours to safeguard the message and principles of the Great Arab Revolt," added the letter.

"Expressing the nation's feelings, Lower House deputies reaffirm their solid backing for Your Majesty and assert their pride in your leadership as they look forward to doubling their sincere efforts to meet Jordan's national objectives."

Also Monday, King Abdullah received Stanley Fischer, vice president of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), who offered the King condolences on the passing of King Hussein.

Governor Ziad Fariz, the two sides discussed cooperation between the IMF and Jordan.

Fischer said the IMF will continue to support the Jordanian economy and will cooperate with the world community to help Jordan maintain its monetary and financial stability.

The King on Monday received at Raghadan Palace General Anthony Zinni, commander of the U.S. Central Command, in a meeting attended by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirai Kaabneh.

Zinni conveyed to the King condolences on the passing of the late King Hussein and reaffirmed U.S. readiness to continue to provide military assistance to Jordan.

U.S. Ambassador to Jordan William Burns was also present at the meeting.

Iraq says five killed in U.S., British air strikes

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Five people were killed in U.S.-led air strikes on southern Iraq on Monday, a military spokesman said, in the wake of President Saddam Hussein's threat to hit Gulf Arab bases used by allied warplanes.

The U.S. military said two sites in a no-fly zone of north Iraq were also hit but from a base in Turkey.

In the deadliest strikes in three weeks, five Iraqis were killed and 22 others wounded, many of them civilians, in attacks on the south, the Iraqi spokesman said.

"Planes coming from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Turkey" carried out a total of 65 "aggressive sorties" in the exclusion zones of northern and southern Iraq, he said.

In Washington, the Pentagon said the strikes targeted a surface-to-air missile site, two telecommunications sites, including one at Nassiriya, and an anti-aircraft defence site.

Seven U.S. planes — including six fighters — as well as an unspecified number of British aircraft, carried out the strikes, it said.

The Ministry of Defence in London confirmed its warplanes were "involved" but added that British pilots continued to make "every effort" to avoid civilian casualties.

A statement from the U.S. military in Turkey said an F-15E dropped a GBU-12 bomb on an anti-aircraft artillery site north of the city of Mosul after

it was fired upon.

And a Marine Corps EA-6B fired a high-speed anti-radiation (HARM) missile at a radar site which had targeted the aircraft, it added. "There was no damage to coalition aircraft."

The latest violence came just hours after Saddam warned that he was "capable" of attacking Saudi and Kuwaiti bases used in U.S.-British air strikes during patrols of the no-fly zones.

"With God's help and the support of the Arab World as well as patriots in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, we are capable of attacking the bases which are a departure point for aggressions," Saddam said late Sunday.

Saddam said the statement, which followed a meeting with his top advisors, was a "warning to leaders in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait that they are unmistakably implicated in the hateful war" against Iraq.

According to reports by U.N. weapons inspectors, Baghdad cannot attack the base in Saudi Arabia from its territory since it only has a few of the 800 long-range missiles it imported prior to the 1991 Gulf War.

But Iraq has yet to provide weapons inspectors with details on its locally-produced missiles with ranges of more than 150 kilometres, banned by the United Nations.

A Kuwaiti airbase, located just under 100 kilometres from the border, would fall within the range of such missiles.

Iraq threatens to attack base in Turkey

Turkish PM defends strikes on Iraq, calls for more trade

Agencies

IRAQ WILL attack the U.S. base in southeastern Turkey if its planes continue to overfly northern Iraq, Vice President Tahar Yassin Ramadan warned Monday.

It was the first time Iraq has threatened to attack Turkey in many years.

In an interview with Radio Monte Carlo, monitored in Baghdad, Ramadan said Iraq was going to attack the U.S. and British bases in neighbouring states because their planes were patrolling the "no-fly" zones over northern and southern Iraq. He said the warning applied to the U.S. base in Incirlik, Turkey, as well as those in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

"If the Turkish base continued attacking Iraq it will certainly be [targeted] like other bases [in the Gulf]," Ramadan said.

Ramadan reiterated the threat made Sunday, after a meeting of the leadership chaired by President Saddam Hussein, that Iraq would attack the U.S. bases and British bases in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, whose planes patrol the "no-fly" zone over southern Iraq.

"I say if America and Britain do not retreat, they'll soon pay dearly in relation to the properties and elements they use to launch aggression on the people of Iraq," Ramadan told the radio.

In Kuwait Monday, a foreign ministry spokesman said the Iraqi leadership's statement showed Baghdad's "aggressive



Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit meets Monday with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz (AP photo)

intention towards its neighbours."

Iraq's warning Sunday was a "direct and serious threat to Kuwait's security and sovereignty," the spokesman told the official Kuwait News Agency.

Earlier Monday, Turkey's Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit defended U.S. and British air strikes on Iraqi missile sites in the northern no-fly zone against complaints from Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz.

Speaking after a meeting with Aziz in Ankara, Ecevit justified the air strikes carried out from Turkey's Incirlik air base as an act of "legitimate

self-defence" by the pilots.

"Tareq Aziz is very concerned about the use of the Incirlik base and has asked us not to authorise it," Ecevit told reporters.

"But we reaffirmed our position that the American and British pilots are acting in legitimate self-defence," Ecevit said.

However, Turkey would not permit aggression against a neighbour from its soil, he added.

As Ecevit was meeting with Aziz, U.S. forces from Incirlik struck at two missile sites in northern Iraq.

Ecevit said he reminded Aziz

Arab League chief rejects Iraqi 'threats'

KUWAIT (AP) — The Arab League dismissed Monday Iraq's threats against Kuwait and Saudi Arabia as unacceptable. "We do not accept threats," league Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid told reporters after talks with the Kuwaiti leadership. The Iraqi government warned Sunday it might attack the American and British air bases in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia because allied planes have been attacking Iraqi air defence sites. "Problems are not solved by threats," Abdul Meguid said. "They are solved through dialogue and negotiations." Abdul Meguid is on a three-day visit to Kuwait to attend a league conference on legal information.

that the air strikes in northern Iraq were provoked by Iraqi forces, and called on Baghdad to recognise the no-fly zones imposed after the 1991 Gulf War and to comply with U.N. resolutions.

Aziz said the talks had been "sincere" and "very useful," the Anatolia news agency reported.

"If we could stop outside meddling, we could achieve understanding and cooperation on a better footing," Aziz said. "Turkey and Iraq are neighbours and friends and share many things. Turkey's security is linked to Iraq's security," he added. "We will not allow outsiders to meddle in our relations."

Ecevit announced that the two countries would seek to invigorate their economic ties.

"We wish to revive our economic relations with Iraq," Ecevit said, adding that he had exchanged proposals with Aziz on concrete steps to this end.

Ecevit pointed out the losses incurred by Turkey as a result of the U.N. embargo imposed on Iraq after the Gulf War of

1991.

"Next to Iraq, Turkey is the hardest hit country," he said.

But the PM stressed that there is "no question of Turkey violating the U.N. embargo."

Turkey puts a \$35 billion price tag on the losses it has incurred by complying with the embargo.

Turkey's foreign ministry meanwhile defended the decision to receive Aziz against U.S. criticism. "It is quite natural that we have some ideas of our own" on policy towards Iraq, foreign ministry spokesman Sermet Atacani told reporters in Istanbul.

"After all, the U.S. has no borders with Iraq. We do."

Washington has expressed unease over Aziz's visit to Ankara, which comes amid rising tensions over the north and south no-fly zones in Iraq. Clashes between U.S. planes and Iraqi air defences in the zones have become more frequent since Britain and the United States launched a four-day air campaign against Iraq in December.

Ultra-Orthodox protest 'opening shot' in war over state and religion

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Ultra-Orthodox Jewish leaders warned Monday that a mass protest over the weekend against court rulings deemed hostile to religious law was only the opening shot in a looming "war" over the separation of church and state in Israel.

"If after this demonstration, the high court is not convinced to cease involvement in church-state issues, there will be war," said Rabbi Menahem Porush, who helped organise Sunday's protest by 250,000 ultra-religious Israelis.

"A democratic state cannot ignore 300,000 to 400,000 people taking to the streets, if it does there will be a terrible situation," added Moshe Gafni, a leader of the ultra-Orthodox Degel HaTorah, overstating the turnout at Sunday's protest.

The strictly Orthodox minority in Israel is furious over a series of recent court rulings challenging the de facto monopoly over religious law held by the Orthodox rabbinate.

The supreme court notably ordered that representatives of the liberal Reform and Conservative currents of Judaism be

allowed to sit on local religious councils — formerly open only to Orthodox Jews.

The court is also considering ruling on one of the most explosive religious issues in Israel — demands that the state recognise as Jews persons converted by Reform and Conservative rabbis.

In another ruling, the high court decided that stores run by collective farms could remain open on the Jewish Sabbath and it ended a blanket exemption from military service for religious seminary students.

Ultra-Orthodox Jews, who make up less than 10 per cent of Israel's population, believe the Reform movement leads Jews away from religion and towards assimilation and represents an existential long-term threat to the Jewish people.

The organisers of Sunday's protest, which was attended by virtually the entire spectrum of Orthodox movements and rabbis — including the country's two state-affiliated chief rabbis — insist that the courts must act in accordance with religious law.

The dispute over relations between religion and state

has been a feature of Israeli history since the founding of the nation 50 years ago.

To avoid outright conflict, issues of religion and state have been dealt with through a system of tacit "status quo" agreements which have given the Orthodox rabbinical establishment its de facto monopoly over religious life.

But the rapid rise of ultra-Orthodox political parties, particularly this decade when they have gained a prominent role in coalition governments, has added new weight to their demands for stricter enforcement of religious law and frightened the country's less observant majority.

Some 50,000 secular Israelis held a counter-demonstration Sunday to demand that political leaders formally pronounce the separation of religion and state.

Politicians from across the right-left divide attended the counter-demonstration to defend the supreme court and its role in protecting democracy.

But three months ahead of national elections, the three main candidates for prime minister

Benjamin Netanyahu, Labour Party chief Ehud Barak and centrist Yitzhak Mordechai — all stayed away, wary of antagonising the powerful religious electorate.

"The ultra-Orthodox have been since the founding of the Jewish state in 1948 a component of observant Judaism in Israel, but it was the least influential," said Charles Liebman, a political scientist at Bar-Ilan University, a religious college outside Tel Aviv.

"Today they are trying to become the banner carrier of the religious," he said, warning that the result is likely to be a backlash in which observant but open-minded Jews join in demanding a formal separation of religion and state.

"The real step that is needed now to bring the situation back into equilibrium is to demand, uncompromisingly, the severance of religion from the state," wrote the editorialist for the Haaretz newspaper.

The newspaper suggested this would mean abolishing the state-funded Chief Rabbinate and transforming local religious councils into municipal departments which would oversee marriage, divorce and burial.



A masked Palestinian student holding his national flag slides down a rope at Al Najah University in the West Bank town of Nablus, on Monday, during a demonstration organised to mark the 34th anniversary last month of Fateh's creation (AFP photo)

Protester lights himself ablaze at rally

ATHENS (AP) — A protester lit himself ablaze outside parliament Monday during demonstrations to demand Greece grant political asylum to Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan.

The flames were quickly put out by firefighters, who were on the scene after threats of self-immolations from some of the estimated 200 protesters.

Another protester standing nearby was slightly burned. Both were treated for slight injuries, police said.

Earlier, police scuffled with the demonstrators, including many children, who carried flags and banners bearing pictures of Ocalan. No injuries were reported.

Greece has refused to offer political asylum to Ocalan and has emphatically denied reports he spent time in Greece earlier this month after being turned away from the Netherlands.

Ocalan's Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) has been fighting Turkish forces since 1984 for autonomy in south-eastern Turkey.

More than 37,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

Turkey wants Ocalan's extradition for trial on terrorism charges, which could carry the death penalty. Ocalan's whereabouts are currently unknown.

There has been no submission until now of a request for political asylum in Greece for Ocalan," Greek government spokesman Dimitris Reppas said.

Athens fears a further deterioration in relations with traditional rival Ankara, if it allows Ocalan to enter the country.

Greek deputies, including many members of the governing Socialist Party, have often voiced strong support for the rebel leader, citing human rights violations in Turkey's crackdown on separatist Kurds. Many have publicly stated the government should offer asylum to Ocalan.

Israeli warplanes attack Hizbollah

TYRE (AP) — Warplanes raided a suspected guerrilla base Monday in the second airstrike on southern Lebanon in two days. The attack came a few hours after guerrillas of the Iranian-backed Hizbollah attacked an Israeli outpost, Lebanese security officials said.

Israeli jets fired one missile at a position between the villages of Zibqine and Yater, 15 kilometers south of this port city, the officials said.

There was no word of casualties. The villages lie in an area facing the Israeli-occupied zone which guerrillas often use to launch attacks on Israeli

troops and their militia allies.

In Jerusalem, an Israeli army spokesman confirmed the raid, saying all jets returned safely to base.

In a statement, Hizbollah said its fighters fired rockets, "scoring direct hits" on the Israeli position at Blatt, three kilometers north of the Israeli border.

Report: Israel plans new strategic special force

AMMAN (J.T.) — Israeli generals intend to add a new special force to deal with future threats to the Jewish state, according to the latest edition of Foreign Report.

The publication, considered one of the most authoritative voices on world affairs, reported that Israel's army will shift from a "regional army" designed to deal with Arab countries bordering Israel to a "sort of global army" with a modern strategic command to deal with future threats from "distant Islamic states."

Among those countries reported to threaten Israel's security are Iran, Pakistan and Kazakhstan. The new force will also be targeting

global "Islamic terrorism."

In late December, 15 generals laid out the new plan in a three-day seminar, with Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz presenting a skeleton plan to Prime Minister Netanyahu's cabinet in mid-January. When dealing with "strategic missions," an ad hoc force was usually assembled from among three current regional commands: southern, centre and northern. The new strategic command will operate in addition to those three commands, and will be headed by a general responsible to the chief of staff. The new command will be built in four stages. Israel hopes to build intelligence infrastructure in countries that do not border the Jewish

state, utilising the military intelligence (AMAN) that would oversee, among other things, an operation of eavesdropping and other forms of monitoring, electronic warfare and computer espionage.

Foreign Report also stated that an Israeli source said another phase of the plan includes the building of a force used exclusively for long-distance missions able to operate far away from Israel. The publication has reported that Israel has already delivered an operative squadron of F-15I jet aircraft. The report did not disclose the location.

Each craft costs about \$80 million and are purchased "naked" from the United

States. Israel installs its own electronic and other on-board equipment. Such a force would be used, for example, in a bombing raid on Iran, with jets returning safely without the need for refuelling. Foreign Report said. A special commando force modelled on Britain's Special Air Service (SAS) is being trained for strategic missions. The chief of staff will coordinate the new command. Israel envisages cooperation with the United States and Britain through liaison officers. Foreign Report said that Israel believes that only these two countries share their security interests and a willingness to fight terrorism beyond their frontiers.

'Jordan, IMF close to agreement'

(Continued from page 1)

With the exception of a sell-off of a 33 per cent stake of the Jordan Cement Factories Companies and bus routes in the capital, the government has been reluctant to press ahead with the politically-controversial privatisation process.

The IMF loan programme might also clear the way for additional assistance from other donor countries and for debt rescheduling with major creditors.

Higher annual debt servicing, which will reach \$821 million this year from around \$500 million last year, is a major burden for the economy, which is expected to register three per cent growth in 1999, one percentage point below population growth rates.

Jordan's economy grew briskly from 1992 to 1994 as an estimated 300,000 workers returned from the Gulf following Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait and put their savings into the economy, mostly in construction.

But the boom petered out and output actually shrank last year, the worst performance since 1989. The budget deficit grew to 10 per cent and foreign debt rose to \$6.8 billion by the end of October from \$6.53 at the end of 1997.

Following the death of King Hussein, Jordan's friends in the region and in the world lined up to offer economic assistance to the country seen as a linchpin of Middle East peace and moderation in a region wracked by extremes.

"The recent expressions of financial support from the world and the region should help very much in the successful completion of the programme," Fischer said.

Anxious to show support, the United States, Britain and Japan all pledged to help Jordan. Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, said they were also looking into ways to help revive the economy, the most pressing task for King Abdullah.

President Bill Clinton has

already pledged \$300 million in U.S. aid to help ensure a stable transition from King Hussein's to his son's rule. He said the United States was also working with key allies and the Group of Seven nations to mobilise additional support.

Clinton said the United States would support a substantial rescheduling of Jordan's debt to bilateral creditors through the Paris Club of creditor nations on the basis of an IMF programme. The World Bank, which recently dispersed \$265 million in loans to the Kingdom, said it was also prepared to provide additional support, but provided no details.

The IMF has come under heavy attack in recent months for its role in the financial crises in Asia and Russia. Critics have said that the IMF policy of encouraging countries to raise interest rates to prevent currencies from devaluing has negatively contributed to growth rates.

(Agencies contributed to this story)

Egypt's foreign minister in Libya for talks on Lockerbie

CAIRO (AP) — Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa travelled to the Libyan capital Tripoli on Monday amid reports that a deal was near in the 1988 Lockerbie bombing case, Egypt's Middle East News Agency reported.

The agency said Musa flew to Libya. It was not immediately clear if he had received a waiver from U.N. sanctions to

do so.

The agency said Musa would deliver a message to Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi from President Hosni Mubarak and hold talks with his Libyan counterpart, Omar Al Muntasser.

It quoted Musa as saying that both the message and the discussions will deal with efforts to bring two Libyans to trial in

the bombing of a Pan Am jet over Lockerbie, Scotland, that killed 270 people.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said Sunday that the Libyan suspects are closer than ever to facing trial but that a clear agreement from Libya is still needed.

Qaddafi had long refused to turn over the suspects, who were indicted in both Scotland

and the United States, arguing that they could not get a fair trial in the West.

Libya later accepted in principle a proposal by the United States and Britain that the men be tried before Scottish judges sitting in The Netherlands. Saudi Arabian and South African diplomats have been mediating on behalf of the United Nations to work out

final details.

Libya has so far balked at the prospect that the Libyans, if convicted, would be imprisoned in Scotland. Arab diplomats said Musa, who is accompanied by Egyptian legal experts, was expected to help the Libyans work out the final details on extradition. The diplomats spoke on customary condition of anonymity.

PRAYER TIMES

04:56Fajr
06:14(Sunrise) Duha
11:50Dhuhr
14:57Asr
17:26Maghreb
18:43Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church
Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifeh
Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church

Tel. 4624757
The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4638052
The Armenian Catholic
Church Tel. 4771331
The American Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Warm weather conditions will prevail with clouds appearing at different altitudes and winds easterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Amman06/19
Aqaba11/23
Deserts03/21
Jordan Valley09/24

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 18, Aqaba 21 Humidity
readings: Amman 23 per cent.
Aqaba 35 per cent.

Following are the temperatures
expected today in the following
areas:

Ajloun05/18
Jerash07/21
Um Qays08/21
Madaba06/19
Petra07/19
Dead Sea14/23

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Khalid Abdo4657129
Dr. Bassam Karadshah4389200
Dr. Fakhri Tayeh4915880
Dr. Ramzi Mazzawi4894788

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy5537004
Rukn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Tamneh (02)250080
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360
ZARQA:
Dr. Isma'il Tallawi (05)903469
Palestine Pharmacy (05)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue
4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192 4621111 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic Police4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 489467
Amman Municipality Complaints
4787111
Telephone Information (directory
assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs
4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special
Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdi5661317
Hussein Medical Centre 5856856
Luzma4630195
Khalidi Maternity4644281/2
Akileh Maternity464241/2
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4777101/3
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marka4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Amal Hospital5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital
(09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital
(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital
(02)7101372, (02)7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital
(02)7102831, (02)7102011
Speciality Hospital (02)7103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)2040111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT

This information is supplied by
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information
department at the Queen Alia
International Airport
(+962)53200-5, where it should
always be verified. Information on
other flights can be supplied on
phone 44 (52700). Information on
Royal Wings flights can be
supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

07:15San'a (RJ)
07:30Damascus (RJ)
09:50Tehran, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:15Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
16:20Cairo (RJ)
17:30London, Frankfurt (RJ)
18:15Chicago, Shannon (RJ)
23:10Beirut (RJ)

Other Flights
12:30Aden (TY)
14:35Istanbul (TK)
18:00Dubai, Damascus (EK)
18:40Beirut (ME)
18:45Kiev (6U)
19:05Paris (AF)
20:25Tel Aviv (LY)
20:40Cairo (MS)
22:25London, Damascus (BA)
23:55Amsterdam (KL)
23:55Larnaca (CY)
00:55Bucharest (RO)
02:00Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
(RW)
07:25 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)
08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)
09:50 Aqaba (arriving at Marka
Airport) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka
Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:25 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:30Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
12:00Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:10Brussels, Paris (RJ)
12:15Berlin, London (RJ)
12:30Cairo (RJ)
19:35Beirut (RJ)
20:30Jeddah (RJ)
20:45Damascus (RJ)
21:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

Other Flights
07:10Frankfurt (LH)
13:30Aden (TY)
15:35Istanbul (TK)
19:00Dubai (EK)
19:40Kiev (6U)
20:00Beirut (ME)
21:10Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40Cairo (MS)
00:35Amsterdam (KL)
01:55Bucharest (RO)
03:00Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
05:00 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Air-
port) (RW)
16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Air-
port) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

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By Ahmad Khattar

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By Dana Chark

By Dana Chark

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Home News

HM Queen Noor receives Malaysian prime minister, Queen Fabiola

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor received Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Ben Mohammad and his wife, who were welcomed at Bab Al Salam to offer condolences on the passing of His Majesty King Hussein.

The prime minister apologised for not being able to attend the King's funeral, adding that he and his wife came as soon as they could.

Queen Noor expressed her appreciation at their visit, describing how much King Hussein valued Jordan's relations with Malaysia, which is a "modern dynamic and yet very authentic Muslim country."

The premier said King

Hussein's presence is missed, especially as "a leader with a moderating influence over the area."

He added that "hopefully His Majesty King Abdullah will follow in his father's footsteps."

During the meeting Sunday, the Queen affirmed that King Abdullah is "determined to give life and dynamism to his father's dreams and legacy."

She added that Jordan has a "very special place with countries around the world because of His Majesty King Hussein's efforts and personal contact" and that King Abdullah "inherits that wonderful legacy, which he will build

on."

The prime minister's wife expressed her regret that Queen Noor could not attend the fourth conference of the International Steering Committee on the Economic Advancement of Rural Women (ISC) that was held in Malaysia last October.

Queen Noor, who had hosted the third ISC conference in Amman, said that the Malaysian meeting had "advanced the prospects and promoted the needs of rural women — politically and socially."

Attending the meeting were Malaysian Ambassador Abdul Latif Bin Awang and the Charge

d'Affaires Ku Jafar Kushari.

Earlier in Aqaba, Queen Noor had received Queen Fabiola of Belgium, who serves with Queen Noor, on the ISC Board. The ISC, which was founded in 1992, is an advocacy group comprising wives of heads of state and governments representing the world's five regions, who promote the implementation of the Geneva Declaration for Rural Women through the mobilisation of political will and public opinion and the formulation and implementation of national policies for rural women around the world.

Crown Prince receives condolence cables, princes visit grave

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hamzah on Monday received a cable from Yemeni Vice President Abed Rabbo Mansour, who expressed his deep sorrow and grief over the passing of His Majesty King Hussein. Mansour said King Hussein was one of the world's greatest leaders, and his deeds will remain alive in our memories and be engraved on the brightest pages of modern Arab history.

Prince Hamzah also received a cable of condolences from the president and members of the Amman Chamber of Commerce expressing the sympathies of the industrial sector. Paying tribute to King Hussein's role in the comprehensive progress of Jordan, the chamber wished Prince Hamzah every success in upholding the Kingdom's Hashemite message.

The Crown Prince received a cable from the First Sudanese Vice President Ali Othman Mohammad, who congratulated Prince Hamzah on his designation as heir to the Throne and wished him every success.

Also Monday, HHR Prince Mohammad, the personal representative of His Majesty the King, visited the grave of King Hussein and recited Al Fatiha.

HRH Prince Faisal and the King's advisor for Islamic Affairs and Chief Islamic Justice Sheikh Izzeddin Al Khatib Al Tamimi also visited the grave site and recited Al Fatiha for the late King Hussein's soul.

Sharia court judges, Arab cultural attaches in Amman as well as scouts and students arrived at the Royal Palace complex to pay their respects to King Hussein, laying floral wreaths over his tomb.

Many also queued to sign their names in the register of condolences opened to the public at the Royal Court.

Securities Commission declares Friday-Saturday weekend for AFM

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Brokers' Association Chairman Mohammad Bilbeisi has welcomed the Securities Commission's decision to declare a two-day weekend for the Amman Financial Market (AFM), saying the move met with members' satisfaction.

Bilbeisi said the Commission's decision to declare Saturday, in addition to Friday, as a holiday will not cut contacts with international stock markets "especially in the United States."

Successive governments have for years been studying the pros and cons of establishing a two-day

weekend. Much of the debate has centred on whether to select Saturday or Thursday.

On Sunday, the commission announced that trading on the stock market will be restricted to five days from Sunday to Thursday.

The stock market thus joins the banking sector which early February was assigned the same five-day work week in accordance with a new government regulation taking effect March 1. Most representatives from both sectors had urged the government to opt for the Friday-Saturday formula so that business contacts between Jordan and foreign markets

would not be restricted, Bilbeisi told the Jordan Times.

He added that as "some banks act as brokerage firms... banks and the stock market should have the same work week calendar."

Bilbeisi said that at a meeting last year "21 out of 23 brokerage firms were in favour of setting Saturday instead of Thursday to make up the two-day holiday."

According to the new regulations, working hours for the stock market will be 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The shares of more than 160 firms valued at over \$4 billion are listed on the AFM.

Italian firm to rehabilitate Amman water system

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — Within five months, an Italian firm contracted to restructure and rehabilitate the water supply system in two Greater Amman areas is expected to present the Water Authority with its final design aimed at satisfying the water needs to 300,000 residents.

Water Authority Acting Secretary General Nawaf Daoud said the \$20 million project aims at ensuring the supply of water to Al Rashid and Kharabshah distribution zones.

Daoud added that the company, "Ital Consult," which signed the contract with the Ministry of Water and Irrigation last December and operates in a joint-venture with Jordan's Consulting Engineer Centre, will construct a primary transmission system to supply the two areas with water and build a 15,000-cubic-metre reservoir in Al Rashid.

The plan also includes the adjustment of the water distribution system to the rapid population growth of the two areas, the reduction of technical losses through the replacement or repair of old pipes as well as through the control of water pressure and the establishment of a technically advanced leakage monitoring system.

Illegal use of water reportedly costs the treasury JD15 million in losses every year. The government estimates that more than 50 per cent of water intended to supply the country's citizens is lost annually to both worn out water networks and illegal water usage.

More than 150,000 jobs are expected to be created by the scheme, which will be funded by the Italian government in the form of a soft loan. Repayment of the loan will be made over 35 years, with a 14-year

grace period and 5 per cent interest rate.

Earlier this month, the government awarded a \$55 million contract to the French firm of Lyonnaise des Eaux, the water division of Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux Group.

The 51-month contract, in which the company will also train Jordanians to manage the field, will provide water and wastewater management services and maintenance to the Greater Amman Municipality. The company's objective is to improve water distribution by reducing leaks and other losses in the existing water network.

The Greater Amman Municipality represents 45 per cent of the country's total drinking water consumption.

The World Bank granted Jordan the \$55 million in a loan for the duration of the contract to cover capital expenditure to rehabilitate existing water plants and networks and restructure the water services.

Jordan's population is expected to increase from 5.3 million in 2000 to more than eight million by 2020 — a factor which will severely strain the country's water resources. To prevent water shortage, the government is looking for more efficient use of water for both drinking and irrigation purposes.

Another ambitious project that could, if found feasible, deliver 100 million cubic metres of water to Amman by 2005, is the tapping of the 30,000-year-old Disi aquifer in the south of the Kingdom. The government in January signed an \$800,000 agreement with a local firm to dig two deep wells in Karak in order to examine the water quality of the aquifer as a possible and abundant source of water.

RSS signs water quality control agreement with government

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Royal Scientific Society Monday signed a JD110,000 agreement with the government to examine water quality in 46 areas in Amman including water sources, reservoirs, several main pumping stations and some drinking water sources.

The project will seek to evaluate whether these water sources meet the country's standards and specifications for potable water. It is also intended to monitor wastewater from 20 industrial locations around the Kingdom.

This annual agreement is designed to protect water sources from pollution, collect data on the water quality of surface and underground water sources, monitor some areas along the King Abdullah Canal and Zai Water Treatment Plant as well as reservoirs supplied by the Zai station.

Last year, Japan granted Jordan \$63 million to fund the second stage of the Zai plant expansion intended to increase its water delivery capacity to 90 million cubic metres (mcm) per year from 45 mcm per year. The Zai plant normally supplies around 40 per cent of Amman's water needs, pumping 120,000 cubic metres of water per hour.

According to the agreement, the RSS will conduct chemical, microbiological and other kinds of tests on these areas and will submit its final report before the contract ends in order to take necessary measures if changes occur to the water quality.

Last month, the government said that six early warning stations will be set up soon to monitor the quality of the water from the Yarmouk River flowing into the Zai Water Treatment Plant via the King Abdullah Canal.

Last summer, foul water passed through the Zai plant creating a major water pollution crisis in Amman. Since then, the government has been taking pains to ensure that such an incident does not recur.

The two planned monitoring stations, designed in conjunction with Norwegian experts, are expected to be installed by the end of this month on the Deir Alla and Zai intakes.

Four other plants, scheduled to be operable within the coming few months, will be constructed on the Yarmouk-King Abdullah Canal confluence, the Lake Tiberias intake and along the canal.

Jordan and Syria agreed to set up a similar system on the Yarmouk River. Damascus agreed to set up several water stations to monitor the river water before it reaches Jordan. Plans include the construction of a JD50 million wastewater treatment plant near the border. The system also includes Syrian plans to provide Amman with a weekly report on the quality of river water entering the Kingdom.

The river, which provides the country with 135 mcm of water a year, begins in Syria, flows along the two countries' mutual border and joins the Jordan River downstream from Lake Tiberias, which supplies the Kingdom with 60-80 mcm annually.

Ministry project aims to turn poor students into entrepreneurs

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — The Education Ministry has launched a pilot project to develop the abilities of some 5,000 impoverished students at public schools to earn income either as entrepreneurs or employees, officials said on Monday.

The scheme, launched last month at an estimated cost of \$2.78 million, will be implemented over four-and-a-half years.

Mahmoud Atiyah, director of international projects at the Education Ministry, said students between the age of 12 and 24 will benefit from the programme that will be set up at five public schools and two others run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA).

The programme seeks to create a sustainable mechanism to increase students' readiness to become active members of the economy as employees or entrepreneurs.

"The government, through this programme, aims to give such students equal opportunities similar to those who enjoy a higher standard of living," Atiyah told the Jordan Times in an interview.

The programme will gradually be extended to cover areas in the densely-populated governorates of Zarqa, Irbid and Aqaba by 2002.

"The number of schools participating in the project will be increased annually until the project covers the whole of Jordan," he added.

The U.S.-based Save the Children Federation, a non-governmental organisation, and USAID are helping implement the project by offering funding and internship programmes for students to train in local businesses.

Three months ago, Save the Children Federation submitted a proposal to work with local business leaders and educators to enable young students to become employees and entrepreneurs.

Private volunteers, including economists, businessmen and consultants will train Education Ministry teachers who will work on the project.

They, in turn, will supervise the students who will participate in the programme.

"Year-round activities include classroom courses, summer camps, internships and a job bank in an attempt to qualify and involve the youth in taking an active part in developing the country's economy," Atiyah added.

A joint committee comprising representatives from the Education Ministry and Save the Children will monitor and evaluate the progress of the programme.

Atiyah said the programme aspires to

increase the students' sense of belonging, self-awareness and confidence as active members of the society and to advocate changes in the education system to match employers' needs.

The United States of Agency for International Development is funding the Economic Opportunities for Jordanian Youth Programme (EOJY) as part of its strategic objective to increase economic opportunities for Jordanians.

One in every five Jordanians lives below the poverty line while unemployment is officially estimated at 16 per cent and independently at up to 27 per cent.

The Education Ministry has over the last few months kicked off a string of projects to boost the psychological and physical state of children attending public schools.

Last month, it signed an agreement with the Ministry of Planning to provide schoolchildren in underdeveloped regions of Jordan with day meals.

The move comes as part of the government's efforts to extend the social safety net under a 10-year programme at an estimated cost of JD698 million.

The plan covers less-developed regions, including the country's 13 Palestinian refugee camps and aims at modernising infrastructure services and creating jobs.

Migrating falcons endangered by poachers

By Dana Charkasi

AMMAN — Jordan is trying hard to curb the poaching and training of falcons on its territory by Gulf Arab nationals who arrive here to trap the endangered species during their bi-annual stopovers in the Kingdom.

Officials said that unlike Syria and Iraq where such practices continue unabated, Jordan had the legal tools to combat falcon hunting and poaching because it is a signatory to the Convention Against International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in 1979.

"Through the treaty, we can control the situation very well," said Jihad Shishani, who is the eastern badia wildlife ranger for the Royal Society For the Conservation of Nature which is enforcing CITES in Jordan.

He said wealthy Gulf Arab nationals stream to Jordan during the migratory seasons and camp in the eastern badia, fully-equipped with "their pigeons and cages" to trap falcons for what is acknowledged as a costly hobby, not only for those who partake in it but for the biodiversity of the area that is being depleted of these species.

"During these seasons, they come here to train their own falcons, to capture wild falcons and to hunt other animals such as other birds, wild rabbits, desert foxes, and deer with the help of their falcons," he said.

WILDLIFE FEATURE

Shishani's area of patrol covers 40,000 square kilometres of rare biodiversity areas punctuated by flora, fauna, rock formations and water — a perfect landscape for falcons to find their prey.

However, his mission is often complicated because many of the foreign visitors are from Jordan's neighbour countries "and denying them entry into the Kingdom" on suspicion that they may be poachers "would create a diplomatic problem." Most Gulf Arab embassies have declined comment on the sensitive subject.

CITES has slapped a total ban on hunting, collecting and trading of endangered fauna and flora. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture also issued a law in 1973 banning hunting and the keeping of wildlife in Jordan.

Shishani said falcons use Jordan and neighbouring countries as a hub during their twice yearly migration from Russia to Africa and back.

"Before the start of severe winter conditions they migrate from Russia to warmer areas in Africa in October and November," said Shishani in an interview with the Jordan Times.

"The second migration season occurs during February and March when the falcons leave Africa to migrate back to Russia," he explained.

"On their way to either destination, they cross — among other countries — Syria, Iraq and Jordan, and in Jordan, they take a rest in the northeastern badia area which extends from the oasis-city of Azraq to the village of Rweished near the Iraqi border and beyond."

Shishani said Gulf Arab residents are lured to Jordan because the migrating birds skip their countries as their desert terrain is unsuitable for training and poaching.

"In their own countries, they do have vast areas... but they do not provide the biodiversity that we have here in Jordan," he said.

Hunters use several methods to catch the endangered



Wild falcons in captivity (Photo courtesy of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature)

migratory birds, including pigeons and nets.

One of the most common methods is to use live pigeons — wrapped with a net — as a trap.

"When the falcon grabs the pigeon, it flies away with it while gun shots are fired in the direction of the falcon in order to scare it," said Shishani.

"Frightened by the noise, the falcon tries to get rid of the pigeon and fly away but

cannot because its claws and legs become entangled in the net," he said.

"The swinging weight of the pigeon in the net dangling down on his feet disables the falcon's flying balance and forces it to come down to be grabbed by poachers who fasten a pair of jesses onto its legs and place a leather hood over his head to calm the falcon."

Shishani said falcons

often get injured during this procedure.

"The falcons we confiscate are often injured and need special care, so we put them in medical clinics we have set up before we set them free," he said.

Falconry is a product of an ancient eastern civilisation. The practice dates back at least to 800 B.C.

The earliest authentic evidence is an Assyrian bas-relief, showing a hunter

carrying a falcon on his wrist in the Sargon II Period (722-705 B.C.).

Crusaders and merchants brought the practice to Europe in the Middle Ages.

There are around 35 kinds of "true" falcons, their size ranging from about 15 centimetres long in the falconets to about 60 centimetres in the gyrfalcon.

Since falcons do not breed in captivity they are taken as young birds from the nest or are trapped during migration.

Shishani said some of the people poaching wild falcons in Jordan keep them to enlarge what he called their "passionate collection."

Others capture wild falcons to sell them, mostly to Gulf states, often fetching between JD5,000 to JD100,000 each, depending on their breed and training, he said.

The badia Police work in tandem with the RSCN's wildlife rangers to scan the vast area looking for possible poachers. There was even an incident in which gunfire was exchanged between rangers and poachers who were defying the law.

"When poachers are found, their falcons and equipment are confiscated, and the poachers are tried in court," Shishani said.

Mahmoud Yassin, head of the law enforcement section at the RSCN said Jordan's efforts to curb falcon poaching could be boosted if other countries would sign or implement the CITES.

"With the exception of Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Iraq and Syria, most Arab and Gulf countries have signed the CITES," he said.

"But the problem is that even signatory states are not enforcing the treaty," he told the Jordan Times.

Yassin said Jordan was only "giving entry visas" to people with falcons who transit through the Kingdom.

"However, many of those supposedly in transit stay in Jordan, and the matter is often sensitive because many of them are well connected," he said.

"With the help of the Customs Department on the borders, we are registering on their passports the number of falcons they bring in," Yassin said.

"And when leaving the country, they have to produce the same number of falcons to make sure they have not acquired any falcons poached in Jordanian territory, or even other territories, after transiting through Jordan."

Talks enter final week with stepped-up pressure on Serbs

RAMBOUILLET, France (AP) — The Kosovo peace conference headed into a high-pressure final week Monday, with the United States bearing down hard on the Serbs to make a deal with rival ethnic Albanians or suffer NATO's wrath.

With just 5 1/2 days to deadline, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov went to the 14th century French chateau that is the site of the encounter to try his hand at speeding up the talks between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians.

The Russians are pushing just as hard as the United States for a resolution of the Kosovo conflict by Saturday, but Moscow adamantly opposes the use of NATO air strikes if the talks fail.

Sunday, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright berated Serb President Milan Milutinovic at a Paris meeting in what Serb sources described as an extremely unpleasant encounter, then came out to Rambouillet, 50 kilometres southwest of Paris to drag both sides to the table.

The Albanians, she said later, seemed to accept the plan drafted by the United States and five European countries as a "fair deal" and appeared ready to sign it by the end of the week. The best Albright could say for the Serbs was that they seemed to understand the consequences of a deadlock.

At stake is the future of

Kosovo, a poor southern province of Serbia, the dominant of the two republics in Yugoslavia and home to 2 million people. 90 per cent of whom are ethnic Albanians. An estimated 2,000 people have died since a major outbreak of fighting began a year ago.

"Both sides told me and each other that they recognised they are faced with this historic opportunity, that the killing must stop, that time is short," Albright said after bringing Albanian and Serbian delegations to the table for the first time since the talks began.

Previously international mediators, led by American Christopher Hill, had been shuttling between the two delegations on separate floors of the Chateau de Rambouillet.

"I hope this joint meeting will be a model for further discussions in the coming days," she said.

An American official said he had no idea if direct talks would continue and didn't know if a joint meeting was planned for Monday.

The six-nation Contact Group, meeting in Paris Sunday, extended the deadline for the two sides to reach agreement to noon Saturday.

If there is no settlement by then, French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine said at a news conference: "We would, no doubt, undertake an assessment of

what is next." He did not repeat the NATO threat to bomb the Serbs, although Albright told reporters that "the threat of NATO air strikes remains real."

"We will hold both sides accountable if they fail to seize the opportunity," the six ministers said in a joint statement.

Russia adamantly has opposed the use of military force against Serbia.

Ivanov said after the Contact Group meeting that deploying international troops in Kosovo to enforce an eventual peace settlement was not discussed at Sunday's meeting.

"Yugoslavia is a sovereign country and any international mission, civilian or military, is possible only on consent of Belgrade," Ivanov said.

Albright said she came to Rambouillet with a clear message for both sides.

"They face a fork in the road," she said. "One fork is to disaster, chaos and more killing. The other fork leads back to a rational solution that will achieve peace, democracy and human rights for all the people of Kosovo."

"Let me say that based on my conversation with the Kosovo Albanian leadership today, their delegation recognises that the Contact Group plan is a fair deal for the people of Kosovo and there is every indication that they will be ready to sign by the time the conference is over."



Actor Harry Belafonte poses at the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People's Image Awards in Pasadena as he holds the Chairman's Award for his pursuit of social justice and community service. The awards programme honours the positive portrayals of African-Americans in film, television, literature and recording arts (Reuters photo)

Interim priest takes over, has heart attack

AMRITSAR, India (AP) — Sikhism's new high priest had a serious heart attack Monday soon after taking over leadership of the bitterly divided religion.

Purana Singh, 54, was in serious condition at the Sikh-run hospital in the northwest Indian city of Amritsar, according to heart specialist Dr. Kumar Adrash, saying his attack was more serious than initially thought. Adrash was brought in for consultations from the government-run hospital in Amritsar, as were several top doctors from other hospitals in the city.

Singh, who had a history of high blood pressure, had appeared subdued but showed no signs of illness earlier Monday, when he stood on a flower-decked platform at the doors of Amritsar's Golden Temple, Sikhism's most sacred site. The Sikh bible, a collection of writings by religious teachers known as the Granth Sahib, was taken from its sanctuary in the Golden Temple and placed on the platform for the ceremony.

After a full length yellow cloak known as the siropa, or robe of honour, was draped over his shoulders and he was presented with a ceremonial sword, Singh addressed the crowd in the local language, Punjabi. He called for unity among Sikhs, telling them not to follow the "path of conflict."

Some 15,000 Sikhs responded with shouts of "We pray to God for the

welfare of the Sikh community" and raised their hands to the skies.

Sikhism's 15-member governing body last week named Purana Singh, one of several deputy priests at the Golden Temple, interim head priest of the entire religion. He was to replace Ranjit Singh pending an investigation into charges Puran Singh sought to stir up separatist sentiment in Punjab, the northwestern state where most of India's 20 million Sikhs live.

Most Sikhs take the name Singh, which means "lion." Ranjit Singh's suspension is the latest event in a wrenching debate between Sikh moderates led by Punjab Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal and conservatives led by Ranjit Singh that has had repercussions for the religion worldwide.

Upon hearing of Puran Singh's heart attack, Ranjit Singh said he was praying for his fellow priest. Badal had planned to visit Puran Singh in the hospital, but cancelled his trip from the state capital of Chandigarh, 200 kilometres to the east, when doctors said Puran Singh would be transferred to a Chandigarh hospital as soon as his condition stabilised.

Ranjit Singh has refused to accept the suspension order, and on Monday declared to reporters that "the Sikh masses are with me." But support for Ranjit Singh appears weak.

The day after his suspension, he was unable to convene the five-priest quorum needed to hold a discipli-

nary hearing he had scheduled earlier in an attempt to punish two Badal supporters. Monday, three members of the executive body who had supported him attended Puran Singh's investiture in an apparent switch of loyalties.

In Canada and the United States, an order issued by Ranjit Singh banning the liberal practice of taking community meals at a table rather than adhering to the traditional practice of sitting cross-legged on the floor triggered violent disputes between hard-liners and moderates.

Several moderates were excommunicated for defying the order and at least three Sikhs have been killed and several more injured in clashes over the issue in North America.

Ranjit Singh, once a carpenter with little religious training, was elevated to Sikhism's highest seat in 1990 while on trial for the murder of the head of a Sikh offshoot sect.

Ranjit Singh admits killing Baba Gurbachan Singh, saying he acted to protect Sikhism. In 1997, the Indian president pardoned Ranjit Singh after he had spent nearly 14 years in jail.

Teachings of the religion founded in India as a melding of Hindu and Muslim beliefs say Sikh men must show their faith by several signs, including never cutting their hair and carrying ceremonial daggers to show their readiness to defend the religion. Sikh men wrap their long hair in turbans.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Russia to formally abolish death penalty'

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia plans to formally abolish the death penalty, replacing it with life imprisonment, Russia's justice minister said Monday. Russia promised to abolish the death penalty when it joined the Council of Europe in 1996. Later that year it placed a moratorium on carrying out death sentences, but did not take capital punishment off the books. Courts have continued to sentence people to death, even though nobody has been executed since August 1996, the government says. Earlier this month, Russia's Constitutional Court imposed a second moratorium, banning courts from handing down death sentences until a jury system is adopted throughout Russia — a process that could take years. Human rights activists in Russia and abroad said the court's decision effectively abolished the death penalty, but urged Russia to go one step further and permanently ban capital punishment. Justice Minister Pavel Krashennnikov said Monday that a package of criminal code amendments to replace the death penalty with life imprisonment will be ready by March. Under Russia's promise to the Council of Europe, the deadline for abolishing the death penalty is Feb. 28. Krashennnikov said. He did not explain the reason for the delay. To become law, the bills must be approved by the Russian parliament and signed by President Boris Yeltsin. Parliament's lower house is dominated by Communists and other hardliners who oppose the ban on death penalty and may try to block the bills. Polls show that most ordinary Russians also support capital punishment, which they see as a deterrent to crime.

Gore trails Bush in 2000 presidential race

WASHINGTON (APF) — U.S. Vice President Al Gore continued to trail Texas Governor George W. Bush in the run-up to the 2000 presidential race, an opinion poll published Monday showed. Republican Bush, son of the former president, got 50 per cent of voting intentions to Gore's 40 per cent, the Washington Post survey showed. Most observers had expected Republicans to be hurt by perceptions that they went too far in their pursuit of President Bill Clinton in the Lewinsky impeachment affair. But Bush's score was up by five points from the 45 per cent he received in a January 1998 poll — conducted before the scandal broke over Clinton's affair with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky. Gore's 40 per cent is unchanged from last year, the Post said. The Post's poll showed 59 per cent of respondents approved of the way Gore, 50, was handling the job of vice president, up from 54 per cent in the January 1998 poll. The paper interviewed 1,010 randomly-selected adults Friday and Saturday.

China releases journalist Gao Yu on medical parole

BEIJING (APF) — China Monday released dissident journalist Gao Yu on medical parole, a Hong Kong-based human rights group said. "Gao Yu was let out at around midday. She went home, had a meal and is now asleep," Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China spokesman Frank Lu told AFP by telephone. "But she still has to report to the police station wherever she goes," he said. Gao was arrested in October 1993 and sentenced a year later to six years imprisonment for "divulging state secrets" overseas when she worked for the Hong Kong magazine Mirror Monthly and a newspaper in the territory. Lu said Gao's family received notification of her release from the Beijing Juvenile Offenders Management and Education Centre at around 9.00 a.m. (0100 GMT). She was released at midday on medical parole. She was moved to the juvenile detention centre in late January after having served most of her term at Yanqing Prison near Beijing. Gao had already spent 14 months in prison after the 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square. Gao, who has a heart problem, was due to finish her prison term in October 1999. There have been repeated rumours that she would be allowed to move to the United States on medical parole, but that she rejected such a move.

U.N. agency warns of catastrophe in Angola

ROME (AP) — A U.N. agency Monday warned of looming catastrophe in Angola unless warring factions put down their arms, permitting some 550,000 people forced to flee their homes to return. The Rome-based World Food Programme (WFP) said malnutrition and disease, including malaria and tuberculosis, had risen among the displaced. It also said relentless shelling by UNITA rebels and government forces made distribution of food aid extremely difficult, forcing the agency to rely chiefly on air deliveries. Also, many organisations that help distribute the aid have evacuated staff members, slowing down the delivery process. "We are in a fierce uphill battle, trying to deliver large amounts of food aid to an escalating number of hungry people," said Francesco Strippoli, WFP's representative in Angola. "If the fighting continues and intensifies we could be looking at a large-scale humanitarian catastrophe." said Strippoli. Angola's civil war started in 1975 after a 14-year fight for independence from Portuguese colonial rule. Fighting between government forces and UNITA — a Portuguese acronym for the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola — has escalated in recent weeks.

Boat with 80 illegals sinks, 15 bodies recovered

KUALA LUMPUR (APF) — Fifteen bodies have been found and 59 people are still missing after a rickety boat carrying about 80 Indonesian illegal immigrants sank in rough seas off Malaysia three days ago, police said Monday. Six people swam ashore after the wooden boat went down Friday night off Malaysia's west coast, said Azmi Hashim, deputy police chief at Port Klang in Selangor state. He said 50 police were mounting an air and sea search. The boat came from Dumai in Sumatra. The police of the accident after being detained but could not say where the boat sank. Azmi said police had taken various measures to prevent illegals from slipping into search would resume Tuesday. Hundreds of Indonesians have drowned in recent years while trying to slip into Malaysia in search of jobs. In November 1994 about 60 Malaysia's southern state of Johor.

Obasanjo candidate of prominent Nigerian party

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — All-night voting ended early Monday morning with Nigeria's most prominent political party naming a former Nigerian military ruler as their presidential candidate.

Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo, who ruled Nigeria for three years before giving up power to an elected government in 1979, will be the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party, which has won key victories in local government and state elections since December.

Many political observers believe the national support of the PDP now gives Obasanjo, 62, the best chance to win the presidency.

Obasanjo captured 1,658 delegate votes in the party convention in the northern town of Jos, nearly triple that of the next closest candidate, former vice president Alex Ekwueme.

The Peoples Democratic Party, meeting in the stadium in Jos, about 250 kilometres northeast of the capital of Abuja, began a tangled voting process Sunday evening after finishing accrediting their delegates about midday Sunday — 24 hours late.

While Obasanjo is well-known for having given up power voluntarily — the only Nigerian military ruler ever to do so — his military past has also alienated him from many Nigerians.

Obasanjo told party members Sunday night he was fighting to make Nigeria "great again," Africa's most populous country

is submerged in poverty, ethnic divisions and debilitating corruption despite being the world's sixth largest oil producer.

Several PDP delegates have complained that they were being coerced by party leaders to back Obasanjo, Nigerian newspapers reported Sunday.

The five other PDP contestants, also from the southern part of the country like Obasanjo and Ekwueme, are former cabinet ministers.

Meanwhile, in a surprise move Sunday evening, 65 All Peoples Party leaders chose a former military governor from the southeast, Ogburnaya Onu, as a preliminary candidate. The party's 5,000 members gathered at the convention in Kaduna.

2 parties to decide on joint candidate

LAGOS (APF) — Leaders of Nigeria's second and third largest political parties met Monday to appoint a joint candidate to represent them in a presidential election due in less than two weeks, a top party official told AFP.

A special joint committee of the southwest-based Alliance for Democracy (AD) and the rightwing All Peoples Party (APP) met in Abuja early Monday to designate the common candidate, according to AD national secretary Udenia Udenia, who spoke to AFP by telephone from Abuja.

The AD in late January named former finance minister Olu Falae as its flagbearer in the presidential election due on Feb. 27 while Sunday night, leaders of the APP named as its candidate a little known eastern politician, Ogburnaya Onu.

The parties have agreed to present just one candidate for president, with the other party presenting the running mate, Udenia said.

All parties have to formally notify election organisers of their choice Monday.

Japan's lukewarm non-nuclear policy under threat

TOKYO (APF) — A Japanese province is demanding that visiting foreign warships prove they are carrying no nuclear arms, in a grass-roots challenge to government policy.

The provincial assembly of Kochi, southern Japan, is preparing to vote on an ordinance that would require foreign warships to show "certificates" on the absence of nuclear weapons when they visit.

The move was rejected by Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi Monday but won support from opposition leaders as they battled over bills aimed at expanding Japan's military links with U.S. forces in crises threatening

its security. "Port calls by foreign vessels are under the jurisdiction of the state, which is responsible for diplomatic affairs," Obuchi told a lower house session on security and foreign affairs.

He added entry of foreign warships, once approved by the government, "should not be blocked as a result of a local administration's demand for non-nuclear certificates."

Japan, as the only nation in the world to have been bombed by atomic weapons, has professed for decades to oppose the production, possession or introduction of nuclear arms in its territory.

But, relying on a U.S. "nuclear

umbrella" for its security, the Japanese government has fudged over recurring suspicions that some U.S. ships and planes may carry nuclear arms when they move through its territory.

In 1981, former U.S. ambassador to Japan Edwin Reischauer said nuclear-armed U.S. naval ships have called at Japanese ports and passed through Japanese waters as Washington did not regard the moves as constraining the "introduction" of nuclear weapons.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiromu Nonaka last month made a report that Tokyo may have a secret agreement with Washington to allow U.S. forces

to bring nuclear weapons into Okinawa.

"If there is prior consultation about introduction of nuclear weapons, we will always reject it as we have always pledged to," Nonaka said.

Kochi's governor Daijiro Hashimoto was to call on the prefectural assembly Tuesday to vote for an ordinance on "non-nuclear certificates." A similar ordinance was first enforced by the international port of Kobe in 1975, but the Japanese government is opposed to any more authorities introducing similar ordinances.

Kochi's governor, a liberal half-brother of former prime

minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, first recommended such an ordinance two years ago as his Pacific prefecture prepared to build a new port.

The Kochi assembly is expected to vote on the ordinance on March 15, the final day of its latest session, according to Hirotsuka Fukushima, a spokesman for the prefecture's port and harbour division.

But the ordinance itself seems to be more symbolic than substantial.

"Foreign warships rarely use our ports," said Fukushima, recalling the last visit by a U.S. military ship in Kochi was made nearly five years ago. The ruling

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) sent a message to party officials in Kochi Friday, urging them to block the passage of such an ordinance, the Kyodo news agency said.

Kochi's challenge has won support from opposition parties which have cautioned against excessive U.S.-Japan military cooperation, which could violate Tokyo's post-war constitution which bars itself from using force in settling international disputes.

Under new U.S.-Japan guidelines on defence cooperation, local Japanese administrations are asked to allow U.S. forces to use civilian airports and sea ports in emergencies.

Wor

Gorbac
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MOSCOW (AP) — Gorbachev, the Soviet leader who pulled his troops out of Afghanistan, said Monday that he had not learned their lesson that bitter war.

After Afghanistan for decades, Soviet troops picked their way out Feb. 15, 1989, and the war marked the 10th anniversary of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Primakov laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Soldier, just outside the Kremlin walls, in the 15,000 Soviet soldiers who were killed. He said thousands of Afghans died in the fighting.

Gorbachev said he failed in the war in the territory of Chechnya in 1994-96, showing his administration's failure to understand the military power.

As in Moscow's forces from Chechnya, defeating rebel forces behind a device.

'Amer
twice
crime

WASHINGTON — likely to be the victim of a report by the U.S. Statistics says.

The average rate was 124 per 1,000 in 1996, down from 161 per 1,000 in 1992.

The report notes the first comprehensive study covering 1992-96.

The findings show Indian involvement in bureau director's death.

"Both male and female victims are more likely to be killed than women," the report says.

There are about 100,000 Indians in the United States, just under 100,000 in India.

About seven Indians were involved in one of a different violence than war.

Each year about 100,000 Indians are the same per capita as Indians in the United States.

For people in the United States, the rate is well below that of India.

On any given day, about 18 million Indians are in the United States, but about half of them are in the United States.

The number of Indians in the United States is about 100,000, but about half of them are in the United States.

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Gorbachev says painful lessons of Afghanistan haven't been learned

MOSCOW (AP) — Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet leader who pulled his country's troops out of Afghanistan a decade ago, said Monday that his Kremlin successors have not learned their lessons from that bitter war.

After occupying Afghanistan for nearly a decade, Soviet troops completed their withdrawal on Feb. 15, 1989, and war veterans marked the 10th anniversary with solemn ceremonies across Russia. Many veterans feel they have been ignored and forgotten for their service in Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, just outside the Kremlin walls, in memory of the 15,000 Soviet troops that were killed. Hundreds of thousands of Afghans also died in the fighting.

Gorbachev said Russia's failed war in the southern territory of Chechnya, from 1994-96, showed that President Boris Yeltsin and his administration had failed to understand the limits of military power.

As in Afghanistan, Moscow's forces withdrew from Chechnya without defeating rebel groups, leaving behind a devastated land.

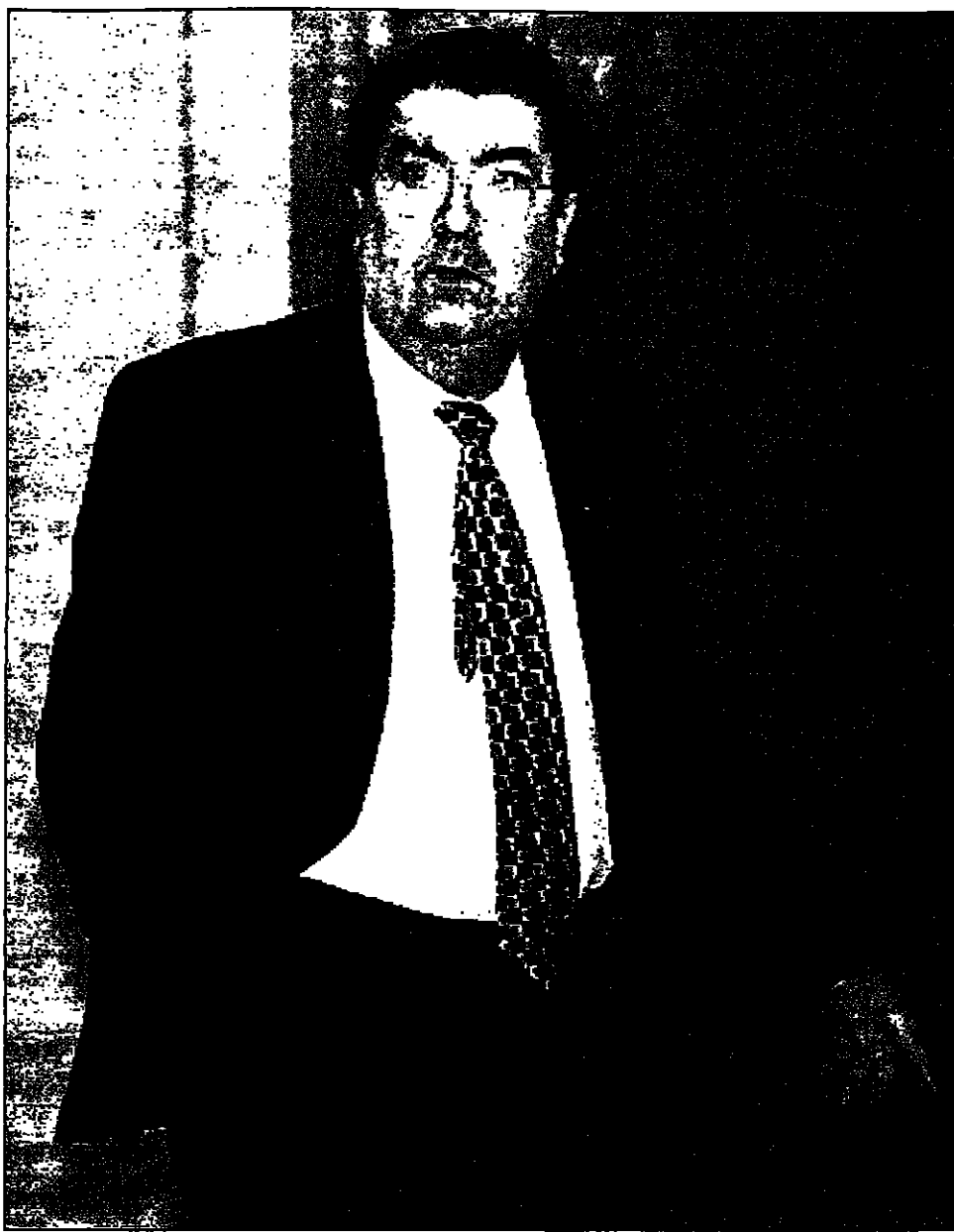
"Political leaders tend to be complacent and then take up arms and cause death and destruction," Gorbachev said in a statement reported by the Interfax news agency. "What is needed is the real democratisation of international relations, the strengthening of the United Nations and other international organisations."

Gorbachev, who came to power in 1985, said he faced an uphill battle in persuading Soviet political and military leaders that a pullout from Afghanistan was the right thing to do.

"We could not allow the withdrawal to turn into a flight with the whole world jeering," he said. "Our generals kept saying that withdrawing our forces could prove more dangerous and bring about more death than sending them into Afghanistan in the first place," Gorbachev said.

Afghan factions have battled among themselves for the past decade, though the Taliban movement now controls most of the country, including the capital Kabul.

The Afghan war was a large drain on Soviet resources and is considered one of the factors that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.



Northern Ireland Social Democratic and Labour Party leader John Hume heads towards the Northern Ireland Assembly Chamber at Stormont, Belfast. The final document on the structures of the future Northern Ireland government will be voted on during the next 24 hours (Reuters photo)

Protestant leader faces dissent in key vote on Belfast accord

BELFAST, Northern Ireland (AP) — Northern Ireland's divided lawmakers debated Monday whether to accept plans for a joint Protestant-Catholic government, the long-postponed goal of last year's Belfast peace accord.

A sufficient majority of lawmakers in the 108-member Belfast Assembly was expected to vote in favour of the compromise package involving the transfer of some powers from the British government, following a debate that could run into Wednesday.

That would clear another obstacle to the eventual formation of a 12-member administration to oversee the government, led by David Trimble.

But Trimble, leader of Northern Ireland's biggest Protestant party, looked in danger for the first time of losing his majority hold on Protestant support in the Assembly. His ability to deliver at least half the Protestant votes is considered an important symbolic measure of whether the peace accord can be made

to work. Of the 58 British Protestant members elected last June to the legislature, Trimble's Ulster Unionists hold 28 seats and another pro-agreement party holds two. The other 28 are held by hard-line parties opposed to compromise.

When the plans for cross-community government were subjected to a preliminary Assembly vote last month, one dissident Ulster Unionist jumped ship to the anti-agreement camp. That left Protestant opinion split exactly in half — 29 for, 29 against.

Monday, a second disgruntled party member said he would vote against Trimble this time. Roy Beggs Jr. said he was motivated by the refusal of the Irish Republican Army — whose Sinn Féin party allies have been earmarked for two administration posts — to start disarmament.

Under terms of the accord, controversial votes in the Assembly should preferably be passed by majorities of both the Protestant and Catholic

blocs or, if that can't be achieved, by at least two-fifths of each bloc.

For Trimble, that means retaining 24 "yes" votes from Protestants.

The Ulster Unionists contend that a majority "yes" vote this week would not automatically entitle Sinn Féin to claim its posts in the administration, if the IRA has not started destroying its weapons, as called for in the peace accord.

But Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams insists that it should clear the way.

The British government wants to transfer many powers to the new administration by March 10, but has conceded the deadline probably will be missed because of the stalemate between the IRA and Protestant politicians.

Trimble's Catholic deputy in the would-be new government, Seamus Mallon, appealed to the Ulster Unionists across the Assembly floor Monday to vote "yes," saying supporting the accord was the only way to encourage eventual IRA disarmament.

'American Indians twice as likely to be crime victims'

WASHINGTON (APF) — American Indians are twice as likely to be the victims of violent crimes as all U.S. residents, a report by the U.S. Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics says.

The average rate of violent victimisations among Indians was 124 per 1,000 residents aged 12 and older, compared to 61 per 1,000 blacks, 49 per 1,000 whites and 29 per 1,000 Asians, the study said.

The report released Sunday was the Justice Department's first comprehensive statistical analysis of Indians and crime, covering 1992-96, the bureau said.

"The findings reveal a disturbing picture of American Indian involvement in crimes as victims and offenders," said bureau director Jan Chaiken.

"Both male and female American Indians experience violent crime at higher rates than people of other races and are more likely to experience interracial violence," Chaiken said.

There are about 2.3 million American Indians in the United States, just under one per cent of the total population.

About seven in 10 violent victimisations of American Indians involved an offender the victim described as someone of a different race — a much higher rate of interracial violence than white or black victims experience, the report said.

Each year about 150 American Indians are murdered, about the same per capita rate in the general population.

For people between 12 and 24 years old, the murder rate among Indians paralleled that of whites and Asians and was well below that of blacks.

On any given day an estimated one in 25 American Indians 18 years old and older is under the jurisdiction of the nation's criminal justice system, the bureau said. That is 2.4 times the rate for whites and 9.3 times the per capita rate for Asians, but about half the rate for blacks.

The number of American Indians in state and federal prisons is about 38 per cent above the national average. But Indians were four times as likely to be confined in local jails as the national average, the study said.

Hong Kong court orders mainland overstayers freed pending ruling

HONG KONG (AFP) — A Hong Kong judge Monday freed a group of 18 mainland Chinese detained for overstaying in the territory pending a ruling on whether they have the right to live here under a controversial local court ruling.

January's ruling by the Court of Final Appeal granting right of abode to all mainland children of at least one Hong Kong permanent resident sparked the first serious dispute between Hong Kong and Beijing since the July 1997 handover.

Chinese legal experts have challenged the ruling, saying it puts the court above China's parliament — the National People's Congress.

And mainland officials told Hong Kong Justice Secretary Elsie Leung Saturday in Beijing that parts of the ruling were wrong and should be corrected.

The mainland criticism has sparked concern in Hong Kong, and in Britain and the United States, that the independence of the territory's judiciary may be under threat.

The 18 were released

from Victoria prison, still named after the British queen whose troops colonised Hong Kong, after high court judge Wally Yeung said they may have an "arguable" case. He said a formal hearing date would be set as soon as possible.

Many expressed happiness at being released in time for a family reunion on the eve of the Lunar New Year. "Of course, I'm happy to have time to join my family's banquet for the new year," one told reporters.

The immigration department had been preparing to send the 18 back to the mainland Monday, prompting a protest by 25 mainlanders outside the prison.

The government said it respected the court's decision, adding that the 18 were released on recognisance pending a judicial review.

But a spokesman reiterated that mainlanders with two-way permits could visit Hong Kong only to see relatives and for sightseeing and must leave before the permit expired.

Hong Kong kept

restrictions on immigration from mainland China despite the handover. The Court of Final Appeal ruling could open the way for tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands more mainlanders to settle in the crowded territory, according to some estimates.

The 18 are among a number of mainland protesters who sought help from the Legal Aid Department in seeking a judicial review of their cases.

Protests by mainlanders demanding the right to stay continued Monday for the 11th day. Senior counsel Philip Dykes told reporters the immigration department's lawyer had admitted in court Monday that the parents of most of the applicants were Hong Kong permanent residents.

Therefore, according to January's ruling, they have right of abode here, he said.

"I'm very pleased. This is quite right," said instructing solicitor Pam Baker.

Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa Monday met

Justice Secretary Leung and other top officials. Details were not disclosed.

However analysts said China seemed to have toned down the row by maintaining it would not interfere in the territory's affairs and by criticising only some elements of the court ruling.

Joseph Cheng, political commentator at City University, said the move was "part of China's strategy to keep Hong Kong's prosperity and stability."

He said Leung's trip had helped identify more accurately the source of Beijing's dissatisfaction when it queried whether the Court of Final Appeal had the authority to examine the actions of China's National People's Congress.

An unidentified government official, quoted by the South China Morning Post, said the trip had been helpful in resolving the matter. "You can say the direction is that the issues of concern are getting narrower."

N. Korean leader fails to attend birthday party

TOKYO (AFP) — North Korea's supreme leader Kim Jong-il Monday failed to attend a party in Pyongyang to celebrate his 37th birthday, according to official media reports.

Kim Jong-il has regularly missed the festivity, which comes one day ahead of his actual birthday, since 1992.

This was the first birthday party since Kim Jong-il was reappointed — with boosted powers — as head of the National Defence Commission in September last year.

The birthday celebration was "held with splendour at the 6,000-seat Theatre of the April 25 House of Culture in Pyongyang today," said the official Korea Central News Agency (KCNA).

The meeting was attended by senior party, state and army officials, including (president of the Supreme People's Assembly) Kim Yong-Nam, said the KCNA dispatch, monitored here.

Prime Minister Hong Song-Nam was also at the party, said KCNA, and he delivered a report titled "Let us accomplish the revolutionary cause of juche (self-reliance) under the experienced and seasoned leadership of the great statesman and great commander."

The premier reportedly told guests: "All the people and the servicemen should consider the slogan 'let us defend

the headquarters of the revolution headed by the great comrade Kim Jong-il with our lives' to be an eternal creed of struggle and life, under which they should prepare themselves to be heroes through human bomb attack and soldiers ready for suicidal explosion."

"They should thus defend with their lives Marshal Kim Jong-il, who is the destiny of the fatherland and the revolution, and strengthen as firm as a rock the singlehearted unity of the leader, the party, the army and the people."

Tokyo's Radiopress monitoring service said Kim Jong-il failed to attend, quoting a Radio Pyongyang live broadcast of the party, according to Kyodo News agency.

The birthday of Kim Jong-il, son of North Korea's founding father Kim Il-Sung was designated in 1995 as one of North Korea's most important holidays.

The People's Armed Forces held a reception Sunday to mark the birthday, at which armed forces minister Kim Il-Chol addressed embassies' military attaches, according to KCNA.

The army minister said his leader had "performed immortal exploits for the country, nation, era and humankind," according to the official report, monitored in Tokyo.

Political leaders arrested in strife-torn Indian state

PATNA, India (AP) — The deposed chief minister in an eastern India state gripped by caste warfare tried to lead a protest march against her ouster Monday, but police quickly jailed her and her powerful husband.

Rubri Devi, who as chief minister was the top politician governing Bihar, her husband Laloo Yadav and some 500 of their supporters were detained by police determined to keep a protest strike from erupting into violence.

Such detentions, known as preventative arrests, are common in India. Those arrested were expected to be released later Monday without being charged.

The general strike kept many shops closed in the Bihar capital of Patna, but traffic was normal

and the streets were peaceful.

Yadav was forced to quit the chief minister's position in 1997 after being charged with corruption. He immediately appointed his wife chief minister and did little to hide that he was wielding enormous power from behind the scenes even as his trial continued.

At the urging of the BJP-controlled federal cabinet, President K.R. Narayanan Friday dismissed Devi's 18-month-old socialist government. The cabinet said it had received an official report that law and order has collapsed in the state.

The imposition of federal rule did not immediately stem violence in Bihar. Sunday, police said, one of several Marxist guerrilla armies active in the state shot and killed seven people

in a rural part of Bihar.

The dead included four high-caste activists of the Bharatiya Janata Party that leads the federal government, Press Trust of India reported. Three low-caste Indians were killed because the attackers fired indiscriminately into the shop where the four targets were standing, police said Monday.

Sunday's shooting followed a series of recent attacks blamed on an upper caste militia that killed 32 people belonging to lower classes.

The Ranvir Sena, an army employed by feudal landlords, regularly clashes in Bihar with Communist-backed militias supporting landless workers. Most of the landless workers are Dalits — or untouchables — the lowest class in India's strict caste system.

Push on to empty Cambodian refugee camps before monsoons

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Cambodia, Thailand and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees pledged Monday to push for the safe return of all Cambodian refugees from Thailand before the monsoon season.

The formation of a new Cambodian government and surrender of the last Khmer Rouge guerrillas last year brought a promise of peace in the war-torn country and paved the way for the closing of three refugee camps on Thai soil.

One camp near a Khmer Rouge stronghold in the jungles of northern Cambodia has already been cleared of 15,000 people, and a second near western Cambodia

is emptying at a rate of about 200 families a day.

A third camp across from Cambodia's northern border containing about 5,000 supporters of the former royalist resistance is preparing a final drive to return its residents.

Thai and Cambodian officials and representatives of the UNHCR met in Phnom Penh Monday and vowed to continue the fast-paced return so refugees can replant their land before seasonal rains arrive in May.

"The success of this operation depends to a large extent on good organisation, but also on the weather conditions. An early rain may hamper it," Uch Kiman, Cambodian secretary of state for foreign affairs,

said at the start of the conference.

The largest concern has been land mines and unexploded ordnance that were strewn through the refugees' villages during the year and a half of hostilities that followed Prime Minister Hun Sen's violent coup over his rival co-prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

Mine clearance agencies have brought in extra teams to step up efforts, but aid officials admit that they cannot guarantee the safety of returning refugees.

UNHCR officials said last week that the eagerness of the refugees to return before the rains left them no choice except to begin the programme.

Stabbing was in self-defence, accused claims

BRISBANE, Australia (AP) — A man who stabbed four American sailors in an Australian nightclub, killing one of them, had been acting in self-defence, his lawyer told a jury Monday.

Jorai Severo Panglinan, 30, has pleaded not guilty in the Queensland state Supreme Court to one count of murder, two counts of wounding and one of attempted murder.

Despite the plea, Panglinan has formerly admitted stabbing the sailors from the 7th Fleet flagship, the USS Blue Ridge, at a nightclub called the Gig in the state capital of Brisbane on Feb. 1 last year.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Kevin Sutton Anderson, a 34-year-old electronics technician from Mount Vernon, N.Y., died from massive blood loss after the knife plunged through his heart.

Hilton Todd Owens was stabbed in the neck and through the chest, Gary Wayne Fryer was stabbed above the eye and Darren Van Johnson was wounded in the forearm.

Normally based in Japan, the Blue Ridge crew were on shore leave during a brief stopover in Brisbane.

Prosecutors allege Panglinan was aggressive, belligerent and confrontational at the nightclub, and had not been provoked into the stabbing. But Panglinan's lawyer Andrew Boe told the jury in his closing address Monday that his client was "stupid" and had acted inappropriately, but he had not started the fight which preceded the stabbing.

"He was concerned about what the Americans were shaping up for," Boe said.

Boe said Panglinan had approached another sailor from the Blue Ridge and asked him to intervene before a fight broke out.

Jordan Times

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Eye-opener

WHETHER THE editor of Al Majd Weekly, Fahd Rimawi, is innocent or guilty of violating the law is a matter for the court to decide. We are sure that our judges will hear all points of arguments in favour of Rimawi and against him and will, in the end, hand down the appropriate verdict.

Meanwhile, we suspect that in the wake of the so-daring news reports that were being churned out from news agencies in Amman and that were aired on the local Monte Carlo and BBC FM stations, Mr. Rimawi sensed a new spirit and started to test the waters.

While we trust the judiciary will be fair in dispensing justice, we cannot but notice that by the time the court's sentence comes out, Al Majd will have incurred enough losses because of its forced closure to drive it into bankruptcy. That is the proof to the charge that many journalists and human rights organisations levelled against the law when it was being debated last year. That the law should punish publishers and journalists who violate the ethics of good journalism or slander people is a legitimate endeavour, but to shut down a newspaper altogether is certainly a violation of the principle of freedom of expression. Mr. Rimawi's brand of journalism might not be the sort that we aspire to. But should bad taste be also punishable? Wouldn't many people end up in jail or out of business if we start a campaign against bad taste?

Last year, when journalists still insisted that the new government of Faysal Tarawneh annul the law, the government insisted that it would apply the legislation softly. And it kept its word. It withdrew most of the cases against the press that were filed before the application of the law. It referred to the ineffective press association instances of new violations. But the association, in the words of the director of the Press and Publications Department, failed to take action against violators.

So much for the government's soft application of the law.

It was unfortunate that the law provided the courts with the authority to shut down papers and to place a blanket on reporting on certain cases that are being tried at the tribunals. These practices that are guaranteed by the law only cast doubt on the credibility of the courts and lend credence to the notion that the judiciary is not free from executive interference.

We hope that this case will be an eye-opener for us all at a time when we look at the future with a great deal of hope.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahd Faneh said that after the smooth transfer of power in Jordan, Arab and foreign analysts are working hard to explore the relations which link the Kingdom and its neighbours. It is obvious that Jordan's relations with each of its neighbours is unique so they cannot be lumped into one category. Faneh argued, but they — Syria, Iraq, the Gulf Cooperation Council, led by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel and Palestine — may be classified into three groups; the countries that could benefit Jordan, the countries that could harm or threaten its stability, and the countries that could both benefit and harm the Kingdom. Jordan's interests requires establishing good relations with countries of all three categories, and the challenge that currently faces the country's leadership is how successful these relations will be, in line with respect, confidence and honest exchange of interests, said Faneh. One country's relations with another must not be at the expense of a third country, and the relations between two must not turn into an alliance affecting independence, freedom and decision taking, he added. Preserving good and positive relations with all these countries, said Faneh, is not an easy process, and needs skilful diplomatic manoeuvring.

Al Dustour's Mazen Saket wrote that the recent Arab and foreign moves to stand by Jordan financially and economically are positive developments, the practical results of which Jordanians are eagerly awaiting. In fact, Saket added, some of these moves have already been officially verified, such as UAE's deposit and the increase in U.S. assistance to Jordan. No doubt such support will have positive effects on the local economy, reduce the deficit, shore up the JD and fund infrastructure projects. However, said the writer, in order to aid such support achieve its objectives, certain economic relations must be improved. For example, suggested Saket, Jordanian exports should be improved, markets should be sought in the Gulf States, Algeria and countries of the former Soviet Union. The writer stressed the importance of overcoming obstacles facing exports to PNA controlled areas. Also to improve the economy, said Saket, labour market in the Gulf states and other countries should be opened to Jordanians in order to reduce the volume of unemployment and solve other economic problems.

Facing the hard choices of modern statehood

View from the Fourth Circle



Rami G. Khouri

IT HAS been instructive but often frustrating in recent weeks to follow the international and Jordanian press' coverage of the leadership transition from the late King Hussein to King Abdullah. With some exceptions, the international press generally has exaggerated the possible destabilising consequences of a change in leadership, while the Jordanian mass media generally has minimised Jordan's real challenges in favour of highlighting our strong legacy and bright future. The reality is somewhere in between, in those more complex quarters of real life where national well-being and stability are determined by the convergence between politics and economics in the lives of ordinary Jordanians. Our country's stability or instability, and progress or regression, are not determined by the entertaining preconceptions of itinerant wordsmiths or commercial ideologues still stuck in the 1950s, but rather by whether the majority of Jordanians feel that their life prospects are improving or worsening.

Our reality comprises conflicting facts. We are a young, educated, socially cohesive, hard-working, and ambitious population whose basic human needs are relatively well met; we enjoy strategic geography, widespread friend-

ships and support, enlightened leadership, and a powerful sense of social solidarity and national cohesion that cut across identity lines of religion, national origin, age, gender, and ethnicity. Yet, we are also a poor country that is steadily getting poorer in the short term, and that remains stuck in a recent cycle of stubborn economic under-achievement. The following sobering economic facts should also stimulate us to translate our many assets into diligent action for progress: published official figures indicate that the modest real economic growth of the years 1993-1995 has been replaced by negative economic growth in the period 1996-1998, and the projections for the coming years are only slightly better. The main problem is that our total population growth rate is well over three per cent a year (natural growth plus immigration) while our real gross domestic product growth rate is about half this, averaging around 1.5 per cent annually in the last three years (1996-98). Our population increased from 4.291 million in 1995 to 4.76 million in 1998, but real gross domestic product per capita in those same years decreased from \$1560 to an estimated \$1430. Parallel recent trends in foreign debt, budget

deficits, water supply, and other such important issues are equally delicately balanced between wholesomeness and vulnerability. Not surprisingly, Jordanians today are more concerned about economic issues than political or ideological matters. The political, moral, and economic support that we in Jordan have received this month is striking and comforting — but it is not unlimited or eternal. We would be irresponsibly foolish to expect to receive some three hundred million dollars of foreign assistance per year indefinitely. The current show of support for Jordan provides us with an opportunity to make those tough economic and political decisions that are required to get us out of the cycle of erratic growth and slow decline that has plagued us for much of the last decade. Our many Jordanian national assets cannot on their own compensate for a continuous decline in the economic well-being of the average family. The Jordanian people in recent years have demonstrated an impressive brand of pragmatism that intelligently balances the things of the heart against the things of the stomach — i.e., we accept ideological and political compromises if we also sense improvements in living standards and an affirma-

tion of our basic human dignity. Our current economic decline in per capita income is manageable and reversible, as our entire modern history has demonstrated. But it requires two parallel responses that should be high on the agenda of our new King and our young government: a) we urgently require a more serious and effective economic growth policy that reflects a national consensus achieved through credible political interaction among all sectors of society, and, b) we need executive governments that stay in power long enough to formulate and then implement long-term economic policies, and that are subjected to much more rigorous

political accountability, both from above and below. The domestic celebration of King Hussein's bountiful life, the warm welcoming of King Abdullah, the positive signs of inter-Arab reconciliation, and the firm support of our friends around the world provide us with a historic but fleeting opportunity: we can tackle our real domestic challenges in a serious and tough manner, or we can cruise along and hope for the best while allowing individual incomes, debt balances, water reserves, and other existential factors to continue to deteriorate slowly but steadily. We have this fresh opportunity to deal with our national challenges on the basis of domestic, regional and international goodwill because we have earned this opportunity — we have earned it through our modern track record of education, nation-building, social solidarity, humane governance, peace-making, and national cohesion. We are neither — as the international and Jordanian press each broadly suggests in their own ways — headed for collapse nor paradise on earth. We are simply standing face-to-face with the hard choices of modern statehood, and the great test of sovereign maturity and good governance that must be accepted and passed by any normal country.

'Out of the Lion came forth honey'

By Andrew M. Rosemarino

WHEN ISRAELI President Weizman asked me in 1995 why I had come to his country, I told him I wished to help the peace process. Mesmerised by King Hussein's and Yitzhak Rabin's courage in their pursuit of peace, I had come to the Middle East, and begun researching ways of advancing regional understanding, first in Jordan, then in Israel. The Israeli Head of State's ears perked up. "What exactly are you working on?" he inquired.

"Your peace process with Jordan, sir," he asked, obviously in surprise.

"With Jordan?" he asked, emphasising the word Jordan in a tone indicating the absurdity of the project. "But that's all been settled," he added.

A year had passed since the signing of the Peace Treaty between Jordan and Israel. The President, like the vast majority of Israelis, saw that all was quiet on its eastern front, and most thought little more about Jordan.

But major issues of vital importance to Jordan's people remained to be settled: water, Jordanian-Palestinian refugees' property in Israel, trade and investment, and most important of all, final status negotiations with the Palestinians, with whom most Jordanians closely identify. To a certain degree, peace with Jordan was taken for granted by the Israeli masses; so was King Hussein, who was deeply loved by many Israelis.

Both Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres were successful in giving the people of Israel the impression that all was well in relations between the two states. Indeed, they both relied on the overwhelming euphoria with which almost the entire Israeli population had welcomed the treaty with Jordan, to assure a sceptical population that they, Rabin and Peres, were successful peace-makers. They wanted everybody to believe that as

they had delivered a problem-free peace with the Jordanians, so they would bring true peace with the Palestinians.

King Hussein had faith in Rabin. For Rabin was an honourable man. Progress in relations was swift under his leadership. Although further bilateral agreements followed under Peres, the momentum began to slow. His relationship with the King was long-standing but highly volatile. Their joint mourning of Rabin initially brought Peres and His Majesty closer.

There was even talk of an American, Israeli, Jordanian and Turkish military alliance! This was the high-point of relations between the two states. But even then, many Jordanians were sceptical of the peace process. The promised economic benefits of the peace failed to materialise: even today, four years after the Treaty's signature, unemployment in Jordan is as high as 27 per cent. The U.N. sanctions, which are biting its main trading partner, Iraq, exacerbate Jordan's economic woes.

King Hussein soon grew discontented with Peres' failure to comply with certain Treaty provisions (e.g. on water, of which Jordan had urgent need for very basic requirements). The King was unhappy with the death of innocent civilians brought about by an Israeli missile attack on Kfar Qana in Lebanon. Perhaps the Likud would advance the Peace Process with greater national consensus in Israel, than Peres could achieve? The King was the only Arab leader to welcome the new Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. But King Hussein soon had reason to be disillusioned with him.

Most significantly, the peace process with the Palestinians ground to a halt. Netanyahu provocatively, and without consulting with his partners in peace, began to build new settlements, at a time when improving good will between all sides was essential. Netanyahu

allies opened the Hashemite tunnel close to Islamic Holy shrines in Jerusalem, without informing the King. Israel finally provided Jordan with the water it had promised, but only after much wrangling. The Mossad attempted to assassinate Khled Mish'al in the King's own capital. It was therefore natural that King Hussein soon lost much confidence in Netanyahu, but he never gave up in his pursuit of peace. And we can all learn from his example. In spite of setbacks with Netanyahu, the King was often ready to assist Israel in peace moves. Without the King, the Hebron and Wye agreements would almost certainly not have been concluded.

The King showed immense compassion in his warm eulogy at Rabin's funeral, and his humility in condoling the parents of the dead Israeli schoolgirls from Beit Sternesh brought him criticism from many of our Arab brothers. But in Israel and among Jews, he was loved and respected more than any other leader. This was an enormous achievement for an Arab, and is unparalleled in history. For he seemed to embody the biblical verse: "Out of the Lion came forth honey." The Lion deserved more than just popularity in Israel. He should have been given more assistance by the Israeli leadership in advancing the peace process, and in building the Jordanian economy. As we have lost the Lion, so Israel has lost that golden opportunity. But the goodwill towards the Hashemite Kingdom remains so great in Israel, that the potential for major progress in the Peace process lives on. This is part of the late King's legacy to the whole region.

The author, an international lawyer, researched the peace process first in Jordan, then as a Fellow at the Harry S. Truman Institute for Peace, Jerusalem. He taught the region's first ever course on legal relations between Jordan and Israel.

All the wrong conclusions

By Gwynne Dyer

"With a single bound, our hero was free..."

THE WHOLE point of the old-time movie serials was to leave the hero trapped in a seemingly hopeless predicament at the end of each episode, so the audience would come back the following week to see how he escaped. But often the predicaments were hopeless, so the lazier writers would begin next week's episode with the famously non-specific line "With a single bound, our hero, etc." They seem to have brought one of those writers out of retirement to script 'The Perils of Clinton', but never mind. With the Senate's Friday vote exonerating U.S. president of all the charges against him, our hero is now free (though living, he assures us, in a 'glut-free zone'), and all the pundits who predicted his demise are now producing wrap-ups of the year-long melodrama that purport to analyse the consequences of this episode. You may be certain that they are still getting it wrong.

Fallacy Number One: The innate wisdom and moderation of the American public has triumphed over the hollow histrionics of partisan politicians and rabid mass media. The American public — or at least the minority who vote — were not interested in punishing Clinton because when everything is going so well economically, who needs a scapegoat? They would have been equally forgiving if Jo-Jo the Dog were president, and had been accused of making a mess on the White House carpet. Who cares, so long as the market keeps going up? Moreover, Clinton is dismantling what little there ever was of a social safety net in America. This pleases most of the people who actually vote — and in the United States, the underclass are too far outside the system even to understand that voting gives them a voice. What saved Clinton was not popular wisdom, but the complacency of the prosperous majority.

Fallacy Number Two: The Republican Party has done itself grave damage by pursuing this vendetta against Clinton long after the voters lost interest. It is twenty-one months until the next Congressional election. Do you really think that the decisive issue in November 2000 is going to be how individual senators voted on Clinton's impeachment in February 1999? The world does not change as fast as breathless TV news bulletins pretend, but it isn't completely frozen, either. If the stock market holds up and the recession stays away, the Democrats will claim the credit, and do well in the Congressional elections in late 2000. If there is a crash, the incumbents will be blamed, and the Republicans will do well. It's the economy, stupid — although even Federal Reserve Bank President Alan Greenspan, who is historically in charge of U.S. macro-economic policy, doesn't really understand what is holding the American economy up.

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Fallacy Number Three: Vice-President Al Gore is a shoo-in as Clinton's successor in next year's presidential election.

It is twenty-one months until the next presidential election. Do you really think that the decisive issue in November 2000 is going to be...? (See above for the rest of the answer.)

Fallacy Number Four: Now, at last, Clinton will be able to turn his attention to foreign affairs, and do something worthwhile for the world in the last two years of his presidency.

Apart from George Bush's stint as ambassador to China, Clinton is the only American president since Roosevelt to have lived outside the United States for even one year as a civilian. He is certainly among the two or three most intelligent and best educated presidents of this century.

be done that is equal to (or maybe even better than) George Bush's. The problem is that — even more than Bush — he has political problems in translating the theory into practice.

Dropping cruise missiles on aspirin factories in Khartoum is not a useful contribution to world order, but it's par for the course for Clinton. The list of special interests and campaign contributors to which he feels beholden, from the America-Israel Political Action Committee to Monsanto, leaves him with virtually no freedom of manoeuvre. He didn't have a significantly better foreign policy before Monica erupted on the public scene, and it won't get better after her return to obscurity either.

Fallacy Number Five: Clinton's place in history has been assured/damaged/destroyed by his vindication/absolution/whitewash in the Senate impeachment trial. (The specific conclusion depends on the particular niche along the 'left-right spectrum' — from far right to centre-left — that any given analyst inhabits within the U.S. media universe.) Wrong question. William Jefferson Clinton never had a place in history. It was not on offer, for he does not live in heroic times, and he has taken no great initiatives.

In terms of U.S. domestic history, Clinton is just a somewhat better than average president living in somewhat better than average times — which gets you a place in long-term popular memory in about the same slot as James Garfield and Chester Arthur. Clinton will stay famous until all the people who spent eight years of their lives with him allegedly in charge of their destinies die off, and not one moment longer.

Is this a terrible fate? No. It's no worse than the historical oblivion that awaits you and me. And nobody will even name a cigar after us.

The writer is a London-based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries.

Letters of condolence

ON THE 7th of February, we lost the greatest human being on earth. We not only lost a king, we lost a grandfather, we lost a father, we lost a brother, and I lost my mentor.

His Majesty King Hussein left this world to join God in paradise. His Majesty (God bless his soul) was a man of courage, integrity, and honest principles. He served Jordan and the people of Jordan for 47 years. Jordan would not be where it is today if it wasn't for His Majesty's constant work and struggle for stability and peace.

Through his wisdom, we grew in knowledge and faith in God. I believe his Majesty Abu Abdullah is looking down upon us and will provide us with his guidance so we lead the path to a great future. His Majesty gave us the will and persistence to achieve a brighter future in this democratic country to secure us from any harmful obstacles that we might face in the future, whether economically or politically.

No other man on the face of this earth was, nor will be able to reach the level of His Majesty's judiciousness, common sense, good judgement, and wisdom.

The world has lost a great man, a great teacher, a great peace maker. May God bless His Majesty's soul and may he rest in peace. Thank you King Hussein, your name is engraved in our hearts.

Shareef Fares Sawalha
 San Francisco
 U.S.

I WAS born and raised in the United States, but my father is an Arab Christian from Rumallah. He was an admirer of the late King Hussein. During my course of graduate studies on the Middle East at the University of Arizona, His Majesty is someone who I also came to admire and respect. Certainly anyone with an interest in that part of the world will feel the same sense of sadness over the loss of this great man who meant so much to those interested in bringing peace to this troubled region.

To King Abdullah, Queen Noor and the extended Jordanian family, please accept my sincere condolences, and my prayers that you will all carry on in the spirit His Majesty would want you to.

Ray Rafidi
 Dallas, Texas
 U.S.

AS A Jordanian who has lived abroad for more than 20 years, my family and I would like to extend our sincere and deepest condolences to Her Majesty Queen Noor, and all the Hashemite family on the loss of our beloved King His Majesty King Hussein Ben Talal.

Up to this moment we feel a great sadness and disbelief. Even the heavens shared with us crying for our beloved King. We are going to miss him as a great leader, a kind father and a wonderful human.

"Abu Abdullah" it was a great honour being part of your big family.

Your Majesty we will never forget you, you are in our hearts, souls and memories until the end of the time.

Rest in peace your Majesty. God bless Jordan and our new leader.

Manal S. Al Atwah
 Amman

Correction

IN A front-page article entitled "Government's challenge in extended mandate remains economy" please observe the following corrections:

Paragraph 17 should read as follows:

By nearly every account, Jordan is most vulnerable in its economy, facing nearly \$7 billion in foreign debt, an amount that equals 91 per cent of its GDP — not an amount greater than its GDP.

Paragraph 23 should read:

Jordan will spend \$812 million in 1999 on repayment of interest and principal debt — up to 27 per cent of its bill get — not 27 per cent of its GDP.

The Jordan Times seeks to correct errors as soon as possible. Please quote date and page number. Readers may contact the Jordan Times at the numbers mentioned elsewhere on this page.

Featur
 Why
 south

The most recent hist
 Islamic castle on the
 photo)

Tough
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By A. J. Singh

THE CELEBRATION was during the recent 25th anniversary of the formation of Project Tiger, a government conservation programme in parks across India. Prime Minister A. B. V. declined to attend the project's jubilee festivities. He official, asking whether tigers were left in the country as a celebration. Project Tiger has delayed release of its 1948 tiger prompting fear that the status big cat in India is worse expected. Official statistics 4,332 tigers roamed India today, the estimate is although many observers figure is lower. India is soon to lose the lion of having the largest tiger population in the world. Stupa Banu, a wildlife expert. The late prime minister Gandhi launched Project 1973. It has since spread national parks in 12 states funded by national

Why has Aqaba 'migrated' towards the south-east for the last 6000 years?

MOST CITIES today pride themselves on being "on the move," but this expression can be taken literally in the case of some ancient towns that "moved" or "migrated" over time. We have many cases of townsites that flourished for centuries, then were abandoned for some reason, and subsequently were re-established in a different but nearby area in a succeeding era.

In some cases, the name of an ancient settlement also moves over time, and is used by a different settlement in a different time period (e.g., biblical Heshbon of the 13th century B.C. probably was not the site now called Tell Hisban, at Hisban village south of Amman, but it was likely located at the ancient site now known as Tell Jalul, east of Madaba; the name Hisban, or Heshbon, moved over time from one townsite to another).

One of the best documented cases of a migrating ancient town is the settlement at Aqaba. In fact, that particular tale is not over, because the town is still growing and moving in several different directions, always with a clear if slow shift towards the south-east.

Work at Aqaba over the past century by several different Jordanian and international teams of archaeologists has generated substantial new information that permits us to track the movement of the town from north to south — usually from north-west to south-east — over the past 6000 years. Why this has happened

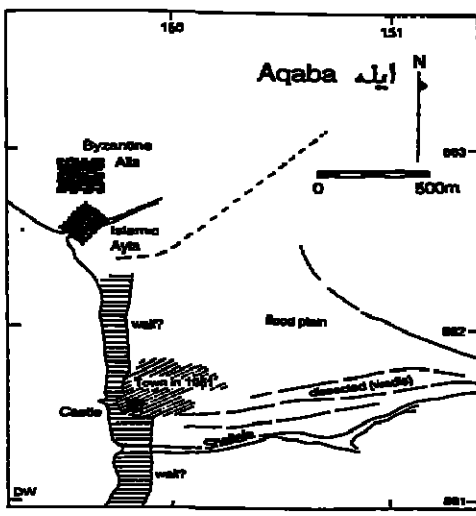
remains unclear, though hypothesis are starting to emerge along with the evidence of the shifting town.

For many decades, the only well documented antiquities at Aqaba were the Mamluke-Ottoman era castle along the east shore of the gulf, and the excavated Iron-Persian period (8th-4th century B.C.) town remains at Tell el-Kheleifeh, about half a kilometre north of the shoreline and alongside the border with Israel.

In recent years, archaeological surveys and excavations have revealed other ancient sites at Aqaba that show an almost linear migration of the site from north to south, comprising the following known settlements:

a) A small copper-smelting settlement at Tell Maquss, just south of the airport and four kilometres north of the seashore, dates from the Chalcolithic period (around 3500 B.C.). It was excavated in 1985 by a University of Jordan team headed by Dr. Lutfi Khalil. A twin site from the same period, 1.5 kilometres to the east, is called Hujayrat el-Ghuzlan, and may have been the residential area for the people who worked the copper smelters at Tell Maquss. Both these Chalcolithic settlements were only inhabited in the Late Chalcolithic era, and then abandoned for some reason.

b) The relatively large Iron-Persian period settlement at Tell el-Kheleifeh



The succession of Byzantine and Islamic era settlements at Aqaba (plan courtesy of Don Whitcomb)

was identified by the German scholar Fritz Frank in 1933, excavated by the American Nelson Glueck in 1938-40, and re-evaluated by the American scholar Gary Pratico in the late 1980s. It has been identified with both Eloth (or Elath) and Ezion-geber of the Bible, which locates Ezion-geber "besides Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom" (1 Kings 9:26-28). This port town also processed copper (which is plentiful and was extensively mined in antiquity on both sides of the Wadi Araba to the north).

c) Surface remains of the Nabataean-Roman-Byzantine town of Aila were identified a decade ago by a survey team from the University of Chicago-led excavation of nearby early Islamic Aqaba. Located just over two kilometres south-east of Tell el-Kheleifeh, the site of Nabataean-Roman-Byzantine Aila is now being excavated by an American-Jordanian team headed by Dr. Tom Parker of North Carolina State University.

The remains of this town are scattered over an area of just over one square kilometre, amidst

streets, houses, hotels, and vacant lots north of the corniche boulevard and the string of hotels along the north shore of the gulf. The remains date from the 1st century B.C. Nabataean era to the end of the Byzantine period in the early 7th century AD; the town continued to be used during the first Islamic centuries, perhaps into the 10th century AD.

Even within its lifespan, this Nabataean-Roman-Byzantine town shows evidence of migrating towards the south-east. The earliest town in the 1st century B.C.-AD Nabataean-Roman era was centred west of Istiqlal Street, some 500 metres north of the corniche boulevard; the late Byzantine town within its well preserved fortification wall, from the 4th century AD, was located some 300 metres closer to the shoreline towards the south.

Today in the area between Istiqlal Street and the corniche. This Late Byzantine town's fortification wall was abandoned by the 7th century, when many of its cut stones were used to build the early Islamic town of Ayla that had sprung up slightly to the south-east — maintaining the settlement's historical migration towards the south-east. d) The Early Islamic town of Ayla that was established in the mid-7th century has been excavated since the mid-'80s by a University of Chicago-led American-Jordanian team headed by Dr. Donald Whitcomb. This walled town was located about 250 metres South-east of the Late Byzantine settlement, and immediately adjacent to the shoreline (in fact, a sort of open-air souq complete with bread ovens has been excavated outside the south wall of this town, virtually on the beach). The Early Islamic town remained in use for about 500 years, until its abandonment in the late 12th/early 13th century, after a brief period of Crusader occupation.

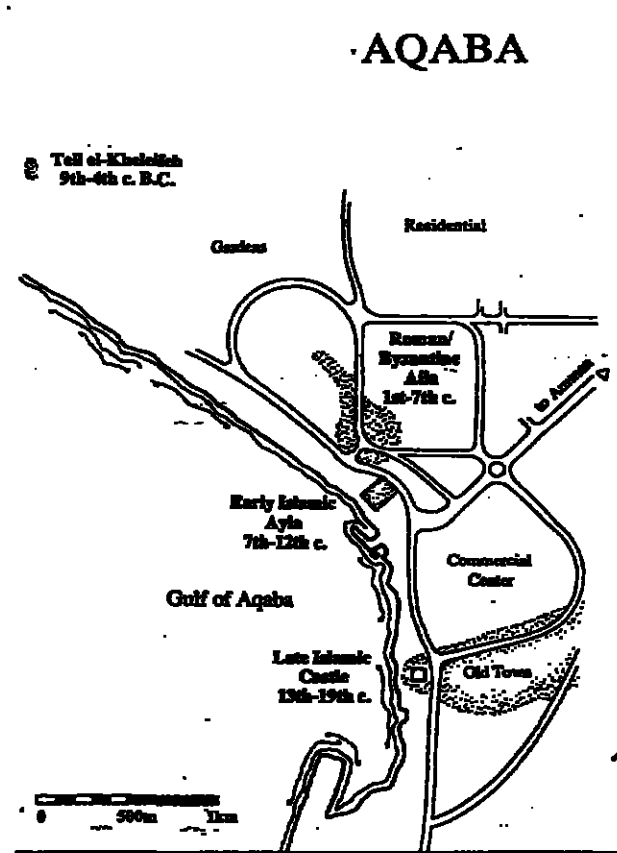
e) The Middle-Late Islamic town at Aqaba after the 14th century moved yet again towards the south-east. This town was centred around the castle that still stands along the east shore of the Gulf. The Crusaders may have built a fort here in the 12th century, which would have been taken over and used by the Arab-Islamic population during the Ayyubid-Mamluke period. The existing castle was built in the early 16th century under the Mamlukes of Egypt, and rebuilt under the Ottomans later that same century. The revival of Aqaba after World War I also started in this area, where the house of Sherif Hussein was built (and has been recently renovated).

f) The modern town of Aqaba continues to expand in several different directions, but with a particularly emphatic move towards the south and east, including port, industrial, commercial, and residential areas.

This "clear and persistent southwards migration of the human settlement at Aqaba," as Parker calls it, may be explained by changes in the shoreline, he said in an interview in Aqaba recently. Other scholars are exploring the possibility that the town moved because it followed the availability of freshwater sources from underground aquifers or



By Rami G. Khouri



Map of the modern town of Aqaba, with ancient and medieval archaeological remains indicated (plan courtesy of Tom Parker)

deposits washed down from the Wadi Araba and Wadi Yutun by torrential rains may have caused the shoreline to move slowly to the south, with the human settlements moving southwards in tandem, Parker said. This is only a working hypothesis that requires further study, as do the other proposed theories, he adds.

Whatever final explanation the scholars may agree on, the next time you visit Aqaba you can take heart in the fact that you are witnessing and participating in the migration of a town that has been on the move — albeit at a rather leisurely historical pace — for the past six millennia or so, and shows no sign of coming to a permanent halt.

The changing shoreline theory is being investigated by Roman Aqaba Project staff geologist Tina Niemi, who suggests that the sea may have extended further north in ancient times. There is some evidence for this from the excavations (sea salt deposition on mudbrick walls) as well as from aerial photos and survey findings, she says.

It is possible that massive fluvial



The most recent historical settlement at Aqaba centred on this medieval/late Islamic castle on the east shore of the Gulf of Aqaba (Department of Antiquities photo)

Tough times for tiger-protection project in India

India's grand plan to conserve its remaining Bengal tiger population is in trouble, as corruption and government neglect leaves Project Tiger nearly helpless to combat the growing power of poachers, and unofficial estimates show the number of tigers to be dropping at an alarming rate.

By A. J. Singh

THE CELEBRATION was muted during the recent 25th anniversary of Project Tiger, a government conservation programme in national parks across India.

Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee declined to attend the project's Silver Jubilee festivities. He chided officials, asking whether enough tigers were left in the country to warrant a celebration.

Project Tiger has delayed the release of its 1998 tiger census, prompting fear that the state of the big cat in India is worse than expected. Official statistics say 4,334 tigers roamed India in 1989. Today, the estimate is 3,000, although many observers fear the figure is lower.

"India is soon to lose the distinction of having the largest share of tiger population in the world," says Satapa Basu, a wildlife expert.

The late prime minister Indira Gandhi launched Project Tiger in 1973. It has since spread to 23 national parks in 12 states and is funded by national and

international agencies. The central government has budgeted 750 million rupees for Project Tiger during the five-year plan, an increase of 300 million rupees from the previous plan.

But money from New Delhi has often not reached the project authorities and was instead used by states as collateral to secure loans from the World Bank and Western donors.

As a result of the money troubles, a lack of political will and little public support for tiger conservation, Project Tiger is in dire straits. As many as 535 on-the-ground staff posts are vacant. The only telephone at the headquarters in Indirawati National Park in Madhya Pradesh has been out of order for a year. In Bandipur National Park in Karnataka state, the Project Tiger field director has no access to the area because a special police task force has camped there for two years trying to catch a sandalwood smuggler.

Experts say that New Delhi should send the funding directly to the project authorities and ensure that staff are trained and equipped with the latest weapons, vehicles and equipment to keep the parks free from poaching.

Although habitat destruction is to blame for much of the historical drop in India's tiger population, poaching is cited as the reason for the rapid decline since 1989, when poachers had wiped out tigers in

China and started to look across the border.

Poachers "can wipe out the entire tiger population of a particular zone in one monsoon if they want to," says Brijender Singh, a former director of Project Tiger now a member of its executive committee.

No coordinated anti-poaching programme is in operation in India. Meanwhile, poachers carry the latest weapons and courts have had limited success in punishing those who've been caught.

Lately, poachers have taken to using poison, a silent, cheap and deadly method that provides them with unblemished carcasses.

Their activity is propelled by huge profits. A tiger's femur fetches \$3,500 per kilogram in Taiwan; each one weighs eight to ten kilograms. Tiger skin fetches about \$10,000 each in Japan and the Middle East. In sum, a tiger's parts can be worth \$50,000.

Experts say poachers are killing around 300 tigers a year, mainly to feed the insatiable market for tiger parts in China, Japan and Korea. Bones have been used for centuries in traditional Chinese medicine, which has become a greater fad of late in the West.

Soup of the tiger penis is believed to be the ultimate aphrodisiac in China. Hanging a tiger's nose above the marital bed is said to induce the conception of a boy. Chinese use tiger's claws for trinkets and make poisons from whiskers to ward off

evil spirits.

Tigers in unprotected areas of India have it much worse than those in parks controlled by Project Tiger. Tigers in parks rarely have to cover more than 20 kilometres to make a kill, while the unprotected ones sometimes need to travel 200 kilometres, which makes them more vulnerable.

Yet being in a park is no guarantee of protection for a tiger. Numerous wildlife documentaries have been shot in Ranthambore Tiger Reserve in the western state of Rajasthan, making tigers like Gengis, Noon and Luxmi celebrities the world over. That hasn't stopped poachers. In 1993, the number of tigers in the reserve was put at 36, but in just six years, the number has dropped to between eight and 15.

"At Simlipal (a park in the eastern state of Orissa), the local tribals practise akhand shikhar (round-the-clock hunting)," says Project Tiger director P. K. Sen. "There is absolutely no check on them. Recently we lost a few tigers."

When one tiger is killed by a poacher, it can result in many more deaths. When a female is killed, its cubs will be neglected and may die. When a male is killed by poachers, fights break out among others for control of his vacated territory and the victor establishes his dominance by killing cubs not sired by him.



A 13-year-old white-handed gibbon, Cinta, protects her two-week-old baby as she sits on a branch at the Singapore Zoological Garden. Cinta was given to the zoo after being confiscated by the government's Primary Production Department in charge of agriculture and wildlife (AFP photo)

Japan posts record \$140 billion current account surplus in 1998

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan announced Monday its current account surplus with the rest of world shot up 38.7 per cent in 1998 to a record 15,860.8 billion yen (\$140 billion).

Analysts blamed the deepest recession since World War II, which has stifled Japan's appetite for imports, for the rise.

And they warned the

imbalance would aggravate trade friction, particularly with the United States which only on Friday announced preliminary anti-dumping duties on Japanese steel imports.

"Since the U.S. economy will likely slow down soon political pressure to revive the Japanese economy will certainly increase," said Susumu Takahashi, chief

economist at the Japan Research Institute.

The current account surplus was more than double the recent low of 7,157.9 billion yen reached in 1996 and it easily broke the previous record of 14,669.0 billion yen posted in 1993.

The current account surplus — which measures trade in goods and services, financial and other transfers — was equal to a 3.2 per cent of Japan's estimated annual gross domestic product.

The 1998 goods and services surplus surged 66.3 per cent to 9,589.5 billion yen during the year.

That included goods trade, which surged 29.9 per cent to 15,993.2 billion yen with exports slipping 1.3 per cent to 48,866.6 billion yen and imports diving 11.7 per cent to 32,873.4 billion yen.

And it incorporated a services deficit of 6,403.7 billion yen in 1998, compared with 6,542.3 billion yen in the previous year.

"The current account surplus was sustained due

to a decline in imports in the face of depressed domestic demand," said a finance ministry official.

"Although we have a modest decline in exports, the fall in imports was bigger," he said. "The main reason for the surplus is Japan's stagnant domestic demand."

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiromu Nonaka said he expected massive economic stimulus packages implemented by the government would "contribute to an increase in imports."

And it was unlikely exports would grow given stagnation in Asia, the growing number of Japanese companies manufacturing products overseas and economic restructuring at home, he told a news conference.

Other figures on the 1998 current account showed income edging up to 7,415.0 billion yen from 6,739.6 billion the year before.

And the financial transfers deficit climbed to 1,143.7 billion yen from 1,071.3 billion yen the pre-

vious year.

The markets barely budged on the news, with stocks up 0.6 per cent and the yen at 114.27-30 to the dollar from 114.05 in New York Friday. "The current account surplus had hardly any impact," said Kazunori Jimai, deputy general manager of equity division at Daiwa Securities Co. Ltd.

Mitsuru Saito, chief economist at Sanwa Bank Ltd., said the biggest factor in the burgeoning current account surplus was weak Japanese demand.

"Amid the current recession, the Japanese market cannot absorb enough imports," Saito said.

Exports were also hurt because "the economic slump in Asia offset steady exports to the United States and Europe," he added.

Japan's current account surplus in December alone rose 13.3 per cent from a year earlier to 1,457.5 billion yen, the data showed.

The trade surplus in the month rose 10.2 per cent to 1,561.0 billion yen with exports down 12.9 per cent to 3,977.2 billion yen and imports also falling 23.3 per cent to 2,416.2 billion yen.

The December rise was due to a fall in the crude oil price that supported growth in the trade surplus, a ministry official said.

"Exports are not posting strong growth, although the falling crude oil price is likely to continue to serve as a factor to expand the current account surplus," the official said.

Exchange Rates Monday, 16-02-99									
ACCESS 4846888									
CURRENCY	JORDAN DINAAR	US DOLLAR	EURO	UK POUND	SWISS FRANC	GERMAN MARK	FRANCE FRANC	ITALY LIRA	SPAIN PESA
JORDAN DINAAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.8778	1.8389	0.1844	2.3382	0.2078	0.7080
US DOLLAR	5.2976	1.0000	1.0209	8.7443	8.5428	1.0089	12.1334	1.1010	3.7507
EURO	5.1893	0.9796	1.0000	8.7443	8.5428	1.0089	12.1334	1.1010	3.7507
UK POUND	0.5325	0.1005	0.1026	1.0000	0.9793	0.1035	1.2151	0.1130	0.3850
SWISS FRANC	0.5438	0.1027	0.1046	1.0211	1.0000	0.1057	1.2151	0.1130	0.3850
GERMAN MARK	5.1434	0.9709	0.9912	8.6581	8.4582	1.0000	12.0000	0.0859	0.3026
FRANCE FRANC	0.4277	0.0807	0.0824	0.8031	0.7865	0.0892	1.0000	0.0859	0.3026
ITALY LIRA	4.2114	0.8082	0.8272	9.0248	8.8478	0.8355	11.2500	1.0000	3.4665
SPAIN PESA	21.4631	4.0552	4.1399	40.3405	39.5055	0.2746	50.2121	0.2936	1.0000
US DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2668	0.2722	2.6522	2.5973	0.1683	3.3025	0.1759	0.6127
EURO	0.8855	0.1634	0.1688	1.6201	1.5619	0.1757	2.2121	0.2085	0.7234
UK POUND	2.4488	0.4819	0.4715	3.7511	3.6734	0.3884	4.6707	0.3152	1.4143
SWISS FRANC	1.9976	0.3771	0.3849	3.7511	3.6734	0.3884	4.6707	0.3152	1.4143
GERMAN MARK	8.2053	1.5491	1.5814	15.4097	15.0907	1.5995	19.1878	1.7056	5.8101
FRANCE FRANC	1.8140	0.3047	0.3110	3.0307	2.9680	0.3138	3.7795	0.3354	1.1427
ITALY LIRA	2.7569	0.5204	0.5313	5.1789	5.0898	0.5360	6.4683	0.5730	1.9519
SPAIN PESA	11.1520	2.1081	2.1490	20.9410	20.5075	2.1682	26.0753	2.3178	7.8956
US DOLLAR	1.3774	0.2572	0.2636	2.5973	2.5401	0.2682	3.3025	0.2795	0.9400
EURO	1.3774	0.2572	0.2636	2.5973	2.5401	0.2682	3.3025	0.2795	0.9400
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MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAAR									
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WORLD STOCK MARKETS									
STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST	CHANGE	PRECIOUS METALS	ASK	BID	ASK	BID
FRANKFURT	DAX	4888.74	4833.33	-45.41	GOLD	389.75	390.25	389.75	390.25
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	9425.42	9146.80	-278.62	SILVER	5.77	5.80	5.77	5.80
LONDON	FT-100	5650.70	5688.50	37.80	PLATINUM	370.00	372.00	370.00	372.00
NEW YORK	DJ INDUS.	8274.89	8262.46	-12.43					
NEW YORK	NYSE COMP.	581.48	580.74	-0.74					
NEW YORK	AMEX COMP.	586.12	585.41	-0.71					
NEW YORK	S&P 500	1230.14	1228.13	-2.01					
TOKYO	NIKKEI-225	14854.72	14873.88	19.16					
PARIS	CAC 40	4080.38	4072.34	-8.04					
FRANKFURT	COMMODITY	4601.20	4601.20	0.00					

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On behalf of the New English School Amman, Said El-Turk Chairman would like to extend his congratulations to President Bill Clinton of the United States on his acquittal after his impeachment trial.

As an afterthought, here are a few poignant words for everyone to read:

"Great people talk about ideas,
Average people talk about things,
Small people talk about other people."

The impeachment trial was an exercise in futility. The American people were right from the beginning: Who are we to set one moral standard for our leaders and another for ourselves? At the end of the day, aren't we all naughty after all?

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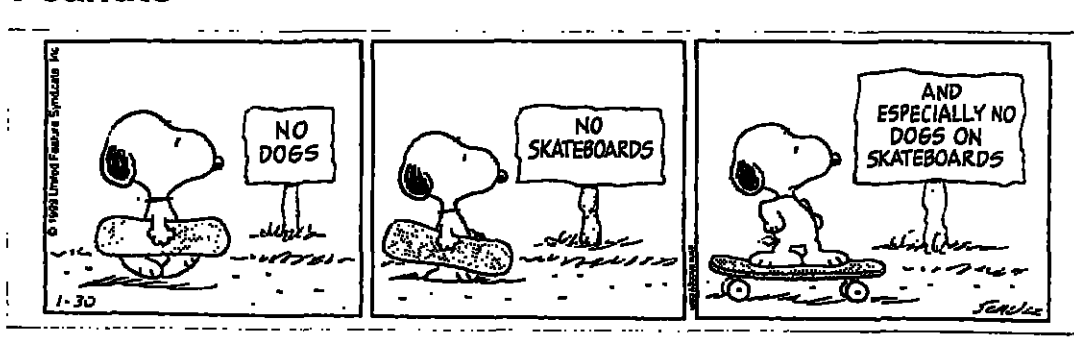
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THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS
1 Pasty insect
5 ... on the wrist
9 Circuit
14 Pueblo people
15 Blood: pref.
16 Low card
17 Sports str.
18 Flare
19 Tied up
20 When confectioners meet.
23 Hermit quail
24 Pint drink
25 4 on the phone
26 Half of B.S.
28 K.T., the singer
31 Night light
33 Roe source
34 Presidential initials
36 ... amas, amat
37 Flying: pref.
38 When hairdressers meet.
42 Billy Joel song.
43 Tense beginning?
44 Col. or Sgt.
45 Drying skin
46 Director Fritz
48 Belted hunter
52 Immaculation
53 Disney dwarf
54 Spring mo.
56 Thru, in Italy
57 When dressmakers meet.
61 Effective use
63 Simon or Diamond
64 Score
65 Barest hint
68 Angry states
69 Gets an A
70 English school sub.
71 Flat-bottomed rowboat
72 Sail support

DOWN
1 Segregated housing
2 Snacks
3 Request another hearing
4 Barely perceptible warmer
5 Shoulder
6 Flood barriers
7 French friend
8 Competition follow-up
9 Dwight's opponent
10 Repeat
11 Extra rations
12 Arctic surface
13 Politician Kennedy
21 Beachlike
22 Tossed
27 Train units
28 Alter sentence
30 That is (to say): Latin
32 Occupied
33 Relish
35 Use
38 Melt
39 Scotch shot
40 Spider or tick
41 Future oak
42 Turf
47 More ill-smelling
49 Cornish location
50 Uses a soapbox
51 Latest
53 Removes from text
55 ... wally
58 Lofly
59 Younger Seamen
60 Scotch shot
61 S dispenser
62 By way of

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



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JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.
TYID
CNOTH
FISHAM
GISTED
Answer: (Answers tomorrow)
Yesterday's Jumbles: FRAME PAYEE GARBLE BEFOUL
Answer: What you might call the diner's threat at the steakhouse — A LEGAL BEEF

HOROS

FOR TUESDAY
Black, Tribune
21 to April 19
Today. This is a
day, a miracle
night was locked
of the lesson y
everyone's needs
21 to May 20
don't let a
day could
advised by co
have a do
things up to
June 21/A
with having ro
relations. The p
understand the
to be for an
give way to
FEBRUARY 22 to July 21
and appropri
where that nee
it's where you
it would be we
If you don't do
it's not a bad
check with older
some nice
to be saved, and
to the next it
VIRGO: On 23 to September
thing for everyb
your partner wi
this person the j
time to do the t
FEBRUARY 23 to October
creative proje
with color and
the moon trans
of the intuition. You
SCORPIO: October 24 to Nov
for a date, but
it will be symphat
of understand
the very intuitive
lack of money
MARTIAN: November 22
learning and app
it's something th
rather than hav
you haven't done th
CAPRICORN: December 22 to
not quite sure abo
support and assist
learning quickl
the last way, even th
MORON's motto. Today, you
AQUARIUS: January 20 to Fe
now you're going to
going to take more than gro
ment. This has to be done w
from here to there. So before
make up a list and a budget
PISCES: February 19 to March
take waiting to be made, and
make it. You can avoid this by
cheque. To achieve your goal,
other person's goals too.

Birthstone of February:

Sales, ads boost earnings of Al Ra'i to over JD10m

AMMAN (J.T.) — Higher newspaper sales and an increase in the volume of advertisements brought up the total 1998 earnings of the Jordan Press Foundation (JPF), which publishes the Arabic daily Al Ra'i and the Jordan Times, to JD10.10 million, slightly higher than the JD9.95 million recorded in 1997.

Earnings from newspaper sales in 1998 totalled JD2.79 million and from advertisements JD7.28 million.

After accounting for production costs and other expenses, the net aftertax profit in 1998 amounted to JD 2.02 million which, when adding JD402.624 of retained earnings from 1997, became JD2.43 million.

The JPF board of directors has recommended to the general assembly distributing dividends at a rate of 60 per cent, or JD1.80 million, and allocating JD239,650 to a special reserve for an expansion at the institution in the near-term. The remaining JD356,840 were proposed to be transferred to retained earnings.

In 1997, the dividends payable were JD2.1 million of which JD1.2 million were

paid to shareholders as dividends and the rest allocated to voluntary reserves and retained earnings.

Although the dividends rate for 1998 is the same as in 1997, the amount differs because the capital was raised in 1998 to JD3 million from JD2 million.

According to the 1998 balance sheet, the Jordan Press Foundation enjoyed a very healthy financial position at the end of last year. In this regard, total current assets amounted to JD7.74 million compared to JD6.87 million at the end of 1997.

Net fixed assets after deducting accumulated depreciation stood at JD6.25 million. Overall, total assets rose by 5.8 per cent.

Noting that current liabilities totalled JD1.45 million, mostly allocations for income tax and other payables, the working capital was calculated to be JD6.29 million. Shareholders' equity totalled JD12.54 million, a 19.2 per cent growth over 1997.

The healthy balance sheet reflected in some ratios showing profit to capital at 86.6 per cent, profit to equity at 20 per cent and profit to assets at 18.6 per cent.

Jordan leads the Middle East in competitiveness

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan's efforts to globalise its economy through trade liberalisation and modernisation of regulatory environment have been recognised by the international community, the Investment Promotion Corporation (IPC) has said.

The latest issue of "The Global Competitiveness Report 1998" (GCR), which rates countries on factors such as openness, govern-

ment intervention, finance, infrastructure, technology, management, labour, and institutions, has given Jordan a ranking of 34, a score which places Jordan as the best in the Arab region, ahead of Egypt and Turkey.

The GCR ranking places Singapore at the top in overall competitiveness, followed by Hong Kong and the USA as second and third

respectively. The IPC also announced that 1998 witnessed JD480 million in new and expanded investment — a record year for projects taking advantage of exemptions under the Investment Promotion Law. This represented a 26.4 per cent increase over 1997, of which 33 per cent (JD160 million) was of foreign origin.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Your carefully laid plans could go awry today. This is a development you hadn't planned for. Shall we say, a miracle? Might as well. Push again on a door you thought was locked, but use compassion instead of more force. Part of the lesson you need to learn is to listen and make sure everyone's needs are being met, not just your own.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Looks like things are humming right along, but don't let appearances deceive you. A breakdown later in the day could change your plans considerably. You'd be well advised to continue paying attention, even when you think you have a done deal. By tomorrow, you should be able to wrap things up just the way you want them.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) A picture's worth a thousand words today. If you're having trouble getting your idea across, try using a few illustrations. The person you're trying to communicate with will understand those better. Get straight to the point. And don't take no for an answer, either. An initial negative response could give way to a positive one tomorrow.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) Travel to a distant shore looks appealing, possible and appropriate. But there's a glitch. There's some sort of chore that needs to be handled. You might be able to delegate it, but more likely you're just going to have to do it yourself. If you don't do it now, you'll have to do it later, and later would be worse.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) If there's something you want for your home, check with older relatives first. You don't need antique stores if you have a real live grandma with a real live attic. Today contains some nice possibilities: treasure to be found, money to be saved and an emotional bond established from one generation to the next through hand-me-downs.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) You may feel like you have to do everything for everybody, especially if a person you wanted to lean on doesn't seem to be up to the task. Your lack of confidence in your partner will communicate, so try not to let it show. Give this person the jobs he or she is good at, and you'll have more time to do the things you do best.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) This is a good day to start a challenging, creative project. If you're like most Libras, you're very good with colour and design, and that's even more the case now as the moon transits Pisces, which symbolises colour and artistic intuition. Yours should be excellent right now, so trust it.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) A Tuesday night may seem strange for a date, but actually it's a great idea. The conversation will be sympathetic and genuine, and the two of you will find areas of understanding that transcend words altogether. You're very intuitive tonight, and so is the one you love. Don't let a lack of money stop you from setting high goals.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Take those new skills you're learning and apply them at home. Looks like you'll be able to fix something that's broken, or build something you want, rather than having to go buy new. It doesn't matter that you haven't done this particular task before. If you've got a book on it, you can figure it out.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) If there's anything you're not quite sure about, let people know. They'd love to give you support and assistance and all sorts of coaching. You're learning quickly, but you don't have to learn everything the hard way, even though that does seem to be Capricorn's motto. Today, you could learn something quite easily.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) You've had the vision, but now you're going to have to make it happen, and that's going to take more than good ideas. It might also take an investment. This has to be done wisely, or you won't get all the way from here to there. So before you start on your spending spree, make up a list and a budget, then stick to it.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) Looks like there's a mistake waiting to be made, and you're the one most likely to make it. You can avoid this by doing what an older person wants — most likely, the older person who signs your pay-check. To achieve your goal, make sure you achieve this other person's goals, too.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onlyx

Housing Bank ups profit by 60 per cent

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Housing Bank, Jordan's second largest financial institution, Monday said that its profits rose 60 per cent last year.

The bank said in a report that it earned JD32 million (\$45 million) in 1998, up from JD 20 million (\$28.1 million) in 1997. Zuhair Khoury, the Housing Bank's board chairman, said the profits came mainly from good returns on housing and commercial loans in Jordan.

He said the bank doubled its capital to JD100 million (\$140 million) in 1998. Deposits, he added, reached JD1 billion (\$1.4 billion).

The bank was formed in the 1970s. Its shareholders include the governments of Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Libya, Oman and Iran.

A.F.M. TRADE Monday, 15-02-99 ACCESS 4646868

Company	Open	Close	Change
BANKS			
ARAB BK	215.000	215.000	0.00%
INTL BK	1.600	1.810	+0.63%
BL OF JO	1.350	1.400	+3.70%
MIDDLE EAST BK	1.000	0.980	-2.00%
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1.540	1.550	+0.65%
THE HOUSING BK	2.940	3.030	+3.06%
JO. KUWAIT BK	1.680	1.700	+2.41%
JO. GULF BK	0.700	0.700	0.00%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.680	1.700	+1.19%
UNION BK	0.980	1.000	+2.04%
JO. INVEST. FIN. BK	1.280	1.380	+4.69%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.550	0.550	0.00%

BANKS INDEX .285.470 point = +0.53%

INSURANCE

JO. GULF INS 1.770 1.880 +5.08%

INSURANCE INDEX 125.750 point = +0.46%

SERVICES

ELECTRIC POWER	1.790	1.800	+0.56%
IRBID ELECTRICITY	1.790	1.700	-5.03%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.820	0.840	+2.44%
REAL ESTATE	1.100	1.080	-3.64%
AL-RAT	6.770	7.110	+5.02%
AD-USTOR	6.250	6.980	+4.59%
AL-ZARQA FOR EDU	0.890	0.890	0.00%
ARAB INTL FOR INVE&	1.980	2.000	+1.01%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.170	1.190	+1.71%

SERVICES INDEX 115.820 point = +0.88%

INDUSTRY

CEMENT	3.700	3.710	+0.27%
PHOSPHATE	2.450	2.480	+0.81%
ARAB POTASH	4.190	4.140	-1.19%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.880	10.880	0.00%
THE IND. COMM. & AGRIC	1.090	1.080	-0.92%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	3.210	3.230	+0.62%
CERAMIC IND	1.320	1.350	+2.27%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	26.450	27.450	+3.78%
JO. PIPES	1.120	1.140	+1.79%
INTL STEEL	0.530	0.540	+1.89%
RAFA	0.530	0.530	0.00%
DAR AL DAWA	5.850	5.800	-0.85%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.570	0.580	+1.75%
JO. STEEL	0.870	0.960	+1.03%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.900	1.910	+0.53%
CHLORINE	1.220	1.230	+0.82%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.400	0.410	+2.50%
NTL IND	0.350	0.350	0.00%
PETRO - CHEMICAL	0.310	0.310	0.00%
SULPHO - CHEMICALS	0.410	0.430	+4.88%
ARAB CENTER FOR PHAR	1.350	1.360	+0.74%
EL-ZAY	1.300	1.360	+4.62%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.680	0.680	0.00%
IND. RESOURCES	0.470	0.450	-4.26%
INTL ALUMINIUM	0.710	0.750	+5.63%

INDUSTRY INDEX 97.490 point = -0.05%

PARALLEL

JO. TRADING FACILITIES	0.390	0.380	-2.56%
UNION INVE. CORP	0.910	0.900	-1.10%
AL - EKBAL	0.870	0.870	0.00%
ADVANCED PHAR	0.530	0.530	0.00%
AL - SHARI	1.060	1.080	+0.00%
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0.420	0.430	+2.38%
AL DAWLHA	0.620	0.620	0.00%
ARAB INVESTORS	0.830	0.950	+2.15%
ARAB INTL TRADE	0.200	0.190	-5.00%
SPECIALIZED INVE	0.770	0.730	-5.19%
OPTICAL & AUDIAL	0.430	0.420	-2.33%
CENTURY	1.170	1.220	+4.27%

ABB

ABB Group in Jordan

mourn with deep grief, the loss of

His Majesty
King Hussein Ben Talal
(May God bless his Soul)

and wish to extend to

His Majesty King Abdullah
and the Royal Hashemite Family heartfelt
condolences and sympathy

Jordanian-European accord still pending approvals by parliaments

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian European Partnership agreement, which Jordan signed on Nov. 24, 1997 has not yet been put into effect, as previously scheduled in January 1999, because it has not been presented to the Parliament for discussion and approval, said Yusef Mansur, director of the technical support unit at the Planning Ministry.

Mansur also heads the aid coordinating unit and a national task force in charge of studying Jordan's competitive edge. In a statement to Petra, Mansur said the Ministry of Planning has started preparing replies to questions put forward by the Lower House's Finance Committee, in preparation for its approval by the Parliament.

The agreement does not only cover free trade between Jordan and the European Union (EU) countries, but also covers economic, political, cultural and social aspects. As a result of this agreement, Jordan had been able in 1996/1997 to get 118 million European Currency Units (ECUs), the equivalent of \$130 million in aid from the EU, Mansur said, adding that a further amount of \$50 million in

aid is expected this year. Jordan is one of four Mediterranean countries which signed the partnership agreement with the EU. These countries are Tunisia, Morocco, Palestine and Jordan.

However, the agreement entered into force only in Tunisia. Other Arab countries, including Egypt, Syria and Lebanon are in the negotiation process with the EU to sign the partnership agreement, according to Mansur, who said that any benefit enjoyed by any country which is in the negotiation process will be applicable to the countries that have already signed the agreement.

Developed nations slash aid in aftermath of Asian financial crisis

PARIS (AP) —

Financing from the world's richest countries to developing nations is declining for the first time this decade, the OECD said Monday, a trend the agency said jeopardises efforts to reduce global poverty.

The Paris-based Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which attributed most of the 11 per cent fall to financial turmoil in Asia, now fears that the United Nations' goal of cutting by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015 could be at risk.

"If the present trend continues, we won't make it," said James Michel, outgoing chairman of the OECD's development assistance committee. The figures released Monday referred to 1997 — the latest data available.

The OECD divided financing into government aid and private investment. Its 29-member gov-

ernments reduced direct aid to developing nations to \$76.8 billion in 1997 from \$78.1 billion in 1996.

Private finance — commercial investment rather than aid — fell to \$252.1 billion from \$282.6 billion in the same period.

That translates into a total reduction of 11 per cent in absolute terms, the first such fall of the 1990s. "All projections suggest that this decline continued and widened in 1998," the OECD said.

The OECD identified Asia's financial crisis as the main reason for the reduction in private funding.

The biggest single factor: bank lending, which was slashed to \$20 billion from \$86 billion, the report said.

The cut in government aid, however, "is political," Michel said. "It's a matter of political priority for donor countries."

"The decline suggests that development is not getting the same priority it used to in donor

countries," Michel said.

Figures show that private investment is continuing to dwarf the amount of aid from government.

Private investment grew to its 1996 high from only \$43.6 billion in 1990.

But private investment rarely reaches the world's poorest countries, Michel said.

Israel, the richest of recipients, also benefited from the largest amount of aid, \$1.89 billion.

Only four countries — Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden — met the U.N.'s target of spending 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product on aid.

The United States, which slashed aid by 27 per cent in 1997, was the smallest contributor, spending 0.09 per cent.

In real terms, total development aid fell by about 20 per cent between 1992 and 1997.

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للاجئين الفلسطينيين في الشرق الأدنى

UNRWA in Jordan mourn the passing away of

His Majesty
King Hussein Ben Talal

We extend our heartfelt condolences to

His Majesty

King Abdullah Ben Al Hussein,

The Hashemite Family and the people of Jordan

May his soul rest in peace

ALSTOM

extend to

His Majesty

King Abdallah Bin Al Hussein,
The Hashemite Family
and the Jordanian People

their deepest sympathy and condolences
on the passing of

His Majesty
King Hussein Bin Talal
May God Rest His Soul in Peace

Jordanians fly flag in UAE Rally

AMMAN (J.T.) — A depleted but determined Jordanian team will fly the flag for the Hashemite Kingdom when the ADNOC FOD UAE International Rally launches the 1999 FIA Middle East Championship in Abu Dhabi next Thursday.

According to rally organisers, two out of six Jordanian entrants will start the first of seven rounds in this year's Middle East series, while the remaining four crews have withdrawn from the event to join their country and the rest of the region in mourning for Late King Hussein who died on Sunday Feb. 7 after a seven-month struggle with cancer.

"We have made the decision to compete and will feel tremendous pride in representing our country during this sad time," said Faris Bustami. "I spoke to some of the other drivers before making my final decision to come to the UAE and I feel the best thing to do is to keep the Jordanian flag flying."

Bustami's Group N Toyota Celica will fly a black flag from its roof as a mark of respect, while his back-up team will wear black arm bands.

"I am still hoping to get a picture of King Hussein sent to me by courier so I can display it in my window to show how much he meant to myself and the people of Jordan," said Bustami, whose teammate Lee Dunn is a Jordan-based Englishman, but will also fly a black flag from his Group N Toyota Celica.

"King Hussein was a big supporter of rallying and competed in several hill climbs back in the 1950s and 60s," said Bustami. "I think it's important to continue the work he started. I feel deep sorrow for his death but in my heart I know that he would want me to compete. Life goes on and our non-participation would not have helped at all."

Held under the patronage of HE Sheikh Saif Ben Zayed Al Nahayan, and

organised by the Automobile and Touring Club for the UAE, the ADNOC FOD UAE International Rally is cosponsored by Mina Zayed. Al Masood Automobiles, Taxi Al Ghazal, Abu Dhabi National Hotels Co., Ford, Danka Kodak, GTS Recovery, and the official hotel and rally headquarters, the Abu Dhabi Hilton.

1999's 5th UAE International Rally will be the first round of the FIA Middle East Rally Championship. It is a two-day event, split into two legs over a route totalling approximately 800-km, of which 280-km are special stages. The stages will be run on unsealed roads, ranging from flat sabkha to hard rocky terrain. The general route of the rally was chosen carefully by the organisers to ensure that group "N" cars can be used to their full potential and with ease of servicing in mind.

With a strong line-up of drivers and machinery heading to the UAE capital from across the Middle East and overseas, the 280-km championship curtain-raiser presents a demanding test in the form of 17 special stages.

Ten-times Middle East Champion Mohammed Ben Sulayem is the overwhelming favourite after cruising to his third successive win in Abu Dhabi last year to launch a perfect championship campaign which brought him six wins in six events.

Sulayem is the strongest Middle East Championship favourite since the FIA. The Arab World's leading driver is firmly expected to add to his current tally of 46 international rally wins.

While it may take a mechanical disaster to block his path to victory, men like Sheikh Abdullah Al Qassimi, Rashid Ben Ghurab, and Nizar Al Shanfari all have their own targets for the year ahead.

Five cars from Jordan competed in the climax to last year's regional series in

Dubai, one of the largest foreign entries for a Middle East Championship round.

With the Jordanians' challenge expected to return to full strength after Abu Dhabi, Bustami and Dunn hope to make an early impact this weekend.

"I will compete in every round this season if possible," said Bustami. "I will probably take it steady in Abu Dhabi because its important to finish the rally and try to get some points on the board. There's a long season ahead and we're confident of making some sort of impact."

Adding a new dimension to the ADNOC FOD UAE International Rally is a category for classic cars, which made a Middle East debut in Dubai last December. The sight of the vintage cars of yesteryear alongside modern day machinery proved highly popular, and has prompted organisers to include the section in Abu Dhabi, as well as other championship rounds in Qatar and Dubai.

The rally gets off to a colourful start at 10 a.m. on February 18, with all the cars being flagged off from the Abu Dhabi Corniche, opposite the Abu Dhabi Hilton Hotel. Following a repeat of the opening three stages of last year, which take competitors towards the garden city of Al Ain, five new stages have been introduced to give the rally a fresh look.

After an overnight halt at the Abu Dhabi Hilton Hotel, the cars set off at 8 a.m. on February 19 for nine more stages, including several new ones in the Sweihan area, with the first car expected to return to the Hilton at 4.15 p.m.

After Abu Dhabi, the 1999 FIA Middle East Championship continues with further rounds in Jordan (May 12-14), Cyprus (June 11-13), Lebanon (July 8-11), Qatar (October 8-10), and finally, Dubai (December 1-3).

NBA ROUND-UP

From the Associated Press

Orlando 85, Milwaukee 82

ORLANDO HELD Milwaukee to four points over the final 6:25 Sunday to knock the Bucks from the ranks of the unbeaten with an 85-82 victory in a matchup of surprising division leaders. Penny Hardaway scored 18 points and rookie Matt Harpring added 15 for the Magic, who lead the Atlantic Division and the Eastern Conference with a 5-1 record — Orlando's best start since winning seven of eight to begin the 1995-96 season. Terrell Brandon had 20 points and Glenn Robinson 15 for the Bucks, who began the day as one of only three unbeaten teams in the National Basketball Association.

Pacers 101, Lakers 99

IN INGLEWOOD, California, Reggie Miller scored 26 points and reserves Jalen Rose and Antonio Davis had strong fourth quarters to lead Indiana, which outscored the Lakers 25-13 in the final 8:55 to overcome a 36-point, 17-rebound performance by Shaquille O'Neal. Miller appeared to clinch the victory by making two free throws with 8.6 seconds left to make it 100-96, but Kobe Bryant's 3-point shot — he was closer to midcourt than he was to the 3-point line — with 4.8 seconds left cut Indiana's lead to one point. After Rik Smits made one of two foul shots with four seconds remaining, Bryant's last gasp 3-pointer rimmed out.

76ers 78, Hawks 70

IN PHILADELPHIA, Allen Iverson scored 32 points, including 15 in the first quarter, and Philadelphia survived a cold-shooting fourth quarter to beat Atlanta. Iverson, coming off a 46-point performance Friday night, hit a key basket with 1:09 remaining after Atlanta pulled within four points. Matt Geiger was the only other double-figure scorer for the 76ers with 11 points. He also caught Dikembe Mutombo in the eye with an elbow. Steve Smith scored 14 points for the Hawks, who shot just 34 per cent.

Spurs 89, Bulls 76

IN CHICAGO, Steve Kerr got his championship ring and then found his 3-point touch Sunday in his return to the United Center to help San Antonio beat Chicago. The loss gave Chicago its first three-game losing streak at home in five years — the year Michael Jordan took off to play baseball. The Spurs led by a one-point lead in the fourth quarter when Kerr, who received his ring in a pre-game ceremony, hit consecutive 3-pointers — the second right in front of the Bulls' bench to give San Antonio a 68-61 lead. After Chicago got back within two points, David Robinson tipped in a shot, sank a jumper and then hit five free throws during a 16-4 run that locked up the victory. Toni Kukoc led the Bulls with 27 points and 11 rebounds.

Grizzlies 96, Mavericks 92

IN VANCOUVER, British Columbia, Sam Mack hit eight 3-point shots and scored 26 points as Vancouver beat Dallas. After draining five 3-point shots in the first half, Mack hit three more in the third quarter to set a team record. He finished 8-for-13 from behind the arc. Steve Nash, a native of Victoria, British Columbia, led the Mavericks with 18 points and nine assists. Shawn Bradley had 10 points, 10 rebounds and four blocks coming off the bench.



Norway's Lasse Kjus holds up the five medals he won following the men's slalom race at the World Alpine Skiing Championships on Monday. Kjus won a silver medal in the race, making him the first man ever to win five medals in a World Championship (Photo by Reuters)

Kjus puts 'Herminator' in the shade

VAIL, Colorado (AFP) — Lasse Kjus stamped his authority on the ninth Alpine Skiing Championships, Norway's "Dominator" vanquishing Austria's "Herminator" with five medals in five events.

Kjus, whose medal haul included two golds, became the first skier to capture a medal in every event since the current five-race format was adopted.

With his slalom silver on Sunday, he finally put Austria's Hermann Maier, who shared the super-G gold with Kjus and beat him with a swashbuckling downhill, in the shade.

But Kjus said his most precious medal was his giant slalom gold. It was one he least expected, and it prevented Maier, the Olympic champion with whom he is locked in battle in the World Cup standings, from becoming only the fourth man in history to win three gold medals at one championships.

Two skiers broke the Norwegian-Austrian monopoly on gold, and in doing so gave their countries their first taste of alpine glory. Zali Steggall won the women's slalom to become the first Australian to capture an alpine world title.

Kalle Palander gave nordic skiing stronghold Finland its first alpine gold in the men's slalom.

For the most part, however, the battle raged between Austria and Norway, with Kjus and Maier the standard bearers.

But neither was alone. Kjetil Andre Aamodt won the men's combined gold and took bronze in the downhill. He and his good friend Kjus both finished the championships

with 13 medals in world and Olympic competition, matching the record established by Luxembourg's Marc Girardelli.

Two young Norwegian women also joined the fray: Anrine Flemmen was second in giant slalom, and Trine Bakke third in slalom.

But there were only two races in the fortnight in which an Austrian failed to mount the podium, the men's combined and the women's slalom. Their dominance was most obvious in the women's races.

Alexandra Meissnitzer won two golds, leading an Austrian sweep in the super-G and capturing the giant slalom ahead of Flemmen and veteran Austrian Anita Wachter.

Wachter came away from her eighth world championships still without a title, but after a career-threatening injury last season she was pleased just to have a chance at the podium.

In the downhill it was Renate Gotschl's turn to lead the Austrian one-two-three, and she came away with two silvers as well.

Swedish veteran Pernilla Wiberg captured one gold and one silver, but Germany's women were clearly hurting in the absence of injured Katja Seizinger.

Italy, too, was shut out of the medals entirely. With no mean to step into the shoes of retired star Alberto Tomba, Italy's medal hopes rested with three-time Olympic champion Deborah Compagnoni, who failed in her bid to win a third straight giant slalom world crown and ended her unbeaten run in giant which had stretched back to 1994.

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Sydney Games chief dismisses Samsung worries

SYDNEY (AFP) — Sandy Hollway, chief executive of the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG), denied reports Monday South Korean conglomerate Samsung was having second thoughts about its \$50 million sponsorship deal.

Hollway said Samsung

Electronics Australia Managing Director Patrick Byrne had confirmed the group remained fully committed to the 2000 Games. "Mr. Patrick Byrne confirmed that Samsung is not reviewing its sponsorship of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games," Hollway said in a statement.

The Sydney Morning Herald reported the firm had expressed "grave concerns" about its involvement in the Olympic Games because of the bribes scandal arising from Salt Lake City's campaign for the 2002 Winter Games.

Samsung is a worldwide partner of the Olympics, placing it in the company of firms such as IBM, Coca-Cola, Visa and McDonalds.

Samsung Electronics' sports marketing manager Kim Se-hun told the Herald that the effects of the corruption scandal surrounding the IOC were being evaluated.

"We believe the recent scandals present some danger to sponsorship," Kim said.

"We still need to evaluate the reports of the various committees

before making decisions or definite comments as to the next step."

Samsung's doubts came after a major Olympic partner, United States insurance firm John Hancock attacked the IOC and said it would not use the Olympic rings as part of marketing programmes until corruption had been purged.

Australian car maker General Motors Holden, which has promised cash and thousands of cars for the duration of the games, has also said it might review its commitment to the 2000 Games.

The SOCOG chief executive has also conceded that a U.S. sponsor has written to Sydney organisers expressing concerns over developments.

Games organisers have admitted that the committee is \$230 million short of its targeted budget of \$2.6 billion.

The Australian government has also warned it is unlikely to commit new funding to the 2000 Games.

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Bruce Willis ... in		Adel Imam, Wafa' Amer & Kamal Shinawi ... in		Comedian A'del Emmam ... in		Adel Imam, Wafa' Amer & Kamal Shinawi ... in		ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria		ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria			
MERCURY RISING		ALWAD MAHROUS TRA' AL WAZIR		AL ZA'EEM		ALWAD MAHROUS TRA' AL WAZIR		THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY		LETHAL WEAPON 4		CLOSED FOR DECORATION	
Shows: 10:30, 8:30, 6:15, 3:30, 12:30		Shows: 10:30, 8:30, 6:15, 3:30, 12:30		Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:30, 9:45		Shows: 12:30, 2:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 3:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30			
						CONCORDE '2' Sleepwalkers				MULAN			
						Shows: 3:30, 5:30 only				Shows: 3:30, 5:00			

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Bordeaux stays top as Marseille loses at Toulouse



French Juventus' player Zinedine Zidane (L) gets away successfully from Piacenza's player Pietro Vierchowod during the Italian league soccer match, on Sunday in Piacenza. Juventus won 0-2 (AP photo)

PARIS (AP) — Marseille missed its chance to return to the top of the French first division on Sunday when it lost 1-0 to a late penalty at Toulouse.

Toulouse, which has now won four consecutive matches under new coach

Alain Giresse, won with a controversial 76th minute penalty from Andrade Oceano, after Marseille defender William Gallas had been penalised for a push on Laurent Batlle.

Toulouse was in combatative form, and in the first

half striker Ahmed Maharzi had struck the bar with a fierce 25 meter (yard) shot.

The result means that Bordeaux, which beat Bastia 2-0 on Saturday, stays one point clear of Marseille.

After the match about 200 Marseille supporters threw objects and fireworks at stadium officials, and some invaded the pitch. Five stadium officials were injured, one with a serious head wound after being hit by an iron bar.

FC Barcelona routs Real Madrid 3-0



Patrick Kluivert (L) of FC Barcelona tackles for the ball with Fernando Hierro (R) of Real Madrid, while Madrid's player Raul watches them, during their Spanish league soccer match in Barcelona (AP photo)

MADRID, Spain (AP) — Luis Enrique Martinez scored twice in the first half, and Rivaldo added a late goal as FC Barcelona rolled to a 3-0 win over a 10-man Real Madrid in a lopsided matchup between archrivals.

Barcelona's ninth straight win in league and cup play gave it breathing room atop the Spanish first division with 43 points, ahead of Mallorca with 38 and Celta with 37 after 22 weeks of play.

For Real Madrid, whose play has been so spotty the team was booed even as it beat Valladolid last weekend, the loss prolonged a 15-year drought in which it has failed to beat Barcelona at the latter's cavernous Camp Nou stadium. Real Madrid remained in fourth place with 37 points.

Valencia, which lost 1-0 to Villarreal, stayed in fifth. For all

the hoopla leading up to this rematch — the teams tied 2-2 in October in Madrid — the game turned out to be a bit of a dud.

Barcelona dominated throughout, grabbing a 2-0 lead after just 36 minutes thanks to headers by Luis Enrique. Rivaldo added a third goal in the 81st on a left-footed kick as he was falling down with Ivan Campo hanging all over him.

Real Madrid played most of the game with 10 men after Roberto Carlos drew a red card in the 20th minute for a rough tackle against Luis Figo. Madrid had numerous chances to get on the board in the second half and even tie the game at two goals apiece but failed.

In the first half, Barcelona wasted little time in getting on the board, with Luis Enrique scoring on a header in the fifth minute on a centering pass from Patrick Kluivert.

Real Madrid didn't manage to get off a serious shot on goal until the 31st minute, with Peja Mijatovic trying a slow angled shot from near the right sideline. Kluivert blew a prime chance to score in the 34th minute as he recovered a loose ball right in front of goalie Pedro Contreras but kicked wide to the left.

Luis Enrique scored again in the 36th, again on a header, this time after a nice arcing pass from team captain Josep Guardiola.

Barcelona's goalkeeper Ruud Hesp showed great form all day, making four saves worthy of highlight films. The first came in the 38th minute as he fell backward and reached up to stop what looked like a sure goal by Raul Gonzalez.

Real Madrid came out stronger in the second half but squandered several chances to

score. The best was one in which Raul practically missed the ball as he tried to kick it in just metres (feet) from Hesp.

In other games Sunday, Zaragoza tied Alaves 1-1; Betis tied Racing 1-1; Athletic de Bilbao played to a scoreless draw with Extremadura, and Valladolid beat Celta 2-1. Tenerife lost 2-0 to Oviedo and Villarreal scored in the 88th minute to beat Valencia.

In games played Saturday, Espanyol beat Atletico de Madrid 2-1, giving the latter its fourth straight loss and prompting team management to fire coach Arrigo Sacchi.

Also, Leonardo Biagini of Argentina converted a penalty in the 64th minute to lead Mallorca to a 1-0 victory over Real Sociedad. And Jose Oscar Flores scored in the 50th minute to lead Deportivo la Coruna to a 1-0 win over Salamanca.

Manchester United edges Fulham 1-0; Arsenal class act of weekend

LONDON (AP) — Manchester United had trouble showing its class in an FA Cup fifth-round 1-0 victory Sunday — on a 26th-minute deflected goal by Andy Cole — over second-division but highly regarded Fulham.

Fulham, being rejuvenated by coach Kevin Keegan and millionaire owner Mohamed Al Fayed, showed to be almost the equal of United before a 55,000 sellout at Old Trafford. Cole scored on a 10-metre (yard) deflected shot off a deep cross, but Fulham almost scored one minute later when Dirk Lehmann was momentarily free in the box before Gary Neville made an artful tackle as Lehmann poised to shoot.

And in the 67th, Fulham's John Salako was stopped from nearly point-blank range as United keeper Peter Schmeichel made a key save diving to his right.

Keegan, being mentioned as the top candidate to replace fired England coach Glenn Hoddle, indicated Sunday he might be interested in the job after saying earlier he wasn't.

"If I'm approached and Fayed gives his permission I will speak to them (FA)," Keegan said. "At this moment in time, I've not had a phone call, but judging by what had happened, mainly in the media, I should be getting one."

In Sunday's other FA Cup match, Blackburn drew 0-0 at Newcastle forcing a replay. In Sunday's draw for the FA Cup quarterfinals March 6-7, it will be: Newcastle or Blackburn vs. Everton; Barnsley vs. Leeds or Tottenham; Arsenal or Sheffield United vs. Huddersfield or Derby; Manchester United vs. Chelsea.

Along with Fulham, the class act of the weekend was clearly defending FA Cup champion Arsenal and coach Arsene Wenger.

After Arsenal beat Sheffield United Saturday 2-1 on a tainted goal, Wenger suggested the tie should be replayed — an offer immediately accepted by the English Football Association with the return expected Feb. 23.

With the match tied 1-1 late in the second half at Arsenal's Highbury ground, United striker Lee Morris was injured in the area on a challenge from Arsenal defender Gilles Grimandi.

United's appeal for a penalty was turned down and, a Morris limped off injured Sheffield keeper Alan Kelly kicked the ball out for an Arsenal throw-in.

Arsenal's Ray Parlour's intended his throw-in for Kelly — in a sporting gesture — but Arsenal teammate Nwankwo Kanu (a Nigerian recently obtained from Inter Milan) took the pass, and crossed the ball to Marc Overmars who scored into the unprotected goal in the 76th.

Sheffield United coach Steve Bruce led a vocal 10-minute protest against referee Peter Jones — joined by 6,000 visiting Sheffield United fans at Arsenal's Highbury ground — but to no avail.

But Wenger stepped up after the victory and offered the replay. "It was unfortunately an accident," Wenger said. "I think spirit-wise we didn't want to cheat ... and Kanu didn't know what happened, he didn't understand at all because he's a very fair player."

"Kanu is feeling very down. He's very sad. And we all have the feeling we didn't win the game like we wanted to. It was an accident," Wenger added.

The FA immediately accepted the show of sportsmanship.

"It is an unprecedented situation," FA spokesman Steve Double said.

"Everybody welcomes the sporting gesture by Arsene Wenger."

Kanu and Overmars also seemed relieved. "I don't feel as if I have tried to do something that was wrong," he said. "I thought the game was going on as normal."

"If I'm honest, I put the ball in the net because I didn't see what happened with the other side," Overmars said. "I didn't know that it was because of an injury that the goalkeeper had kicked the ball out of play."

"But the replay is a good plan. I'm happy with that because it was a mistake and here is a chance to do something about it. I've never experienced anything like this before and it's very sad the way it has gone, but now we can put it right."

In Saturday's other FA Cup fifth-round matches: Barnsley 4, Bristol Rovers 1; Everton 2, Coventry 1; Huddersfield 2, Derby 2; Leeds 1, Tottenham 1; Sheffield Wednesday 0, Chelsea 1; In two Premier League matches Saturday: Charlton 1, Liverpool 0; West Ham 2, Nottingham Forest 1.

In Scotland on Sunday, league-leaders Rangers won 6-0 at Hamilton in the fourth round of the Scottish Cup with two goals from Jonatan Johansson and the rest from Andrei Kanchelkis, Jorg Albertz (penalty), Tony Vidmar and Neil McCann. On Saturday in the fourth round, Celtic defeated Dunfermline 4-0 with three goals from Henrik Larsson for a league-leading 27. In other cup ties: Ayr 1, Albion 0; Greenock Morton 3, Clyde 1; Livingston 1, St. Johnstone 3; Motherwell 2, Stirling 0; Stranraer 1, Falkirk 2. Rangers played late Sunday against Hamilton in the Scottish Cup fourth round.

Confusing start to Women's World Cup

SAN JOSE, California (AP) — Four months before the first match is played, the Women's World Cup got off to a somewhat chaotic start on Sunday.

The draw for the 32-match event, to run June 19-July 10 in seven U.S. cities, resulted in confusion about which nation the Americans will play in their opening match and got more confusing when officials switched around two groups for marketing reasons.

The United States drew North Korea, Nigeria and Denmark in its group for first-round matches. The Americans have six wins and a tie in their 10 games against Denmark, while the U.S. squad has never played North Korea, the surprise Asian qualifier, or Nigeria, which has five losses and a tie in its previous two World Cup appearances.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter announced during the draw ceremony, televised live throughout the United States, that the U.S. team will face North Korea in its opening match June 19 at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

But Women's World Cup officials later said the U.S. team will face Denmark in that opening match. The Americans will play Nigeria at Chicago's Soldier Field on June 24 and complete their first-round matches against North Korea at Foxboro Stadium outside Boston on June 27.

"You could call this the unknown group, because we really don't know North Korea or Nigeria very well," U.S. coach Tony DiCicco said. "Denmark has been a strong, physical opponent for us in the past, and will be a good test for us in the opener."

Tiffany Milbrett, a forward on the U.S. team, said the Americans are more comfortable with Denmark than with the other nations in their group.

"Personally, I am a little scared of unknown teams," Milbrett said. "Often those types of teams are scrappy teams."

And scrappy teams' strengths tend to match up against our weaknesses pretty well."

Organisers also switched around two groups. China originally was announced as the top-seeded team in Group C and Norway, the defending champion, as the top-seeded team in Group D. But those group assignments later were switched, with Norway heading up Group C — with Japan, Canada and Russia — and China leading Group D — with Australia, Ghana and Sweden.

According to the schedule released weeks ago, the top



FIFA President Sepp Blatter speaks during the draw for the final groups of the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup at Spartan Stadium in San Jose, California, on Sunday. The draw was held during half-time of a FIFA Women's World All-Star Match. The matches of the FIFA 1999 Women's World Cup will be played in the U.S. from June 19-July 10, 1999 (AP photo)

team in Group D is scheduled to play its first match in San Jose and the top team in Group C will play its first game at Foxboro.

Organisers said they decided to switch the group assignments because they wanted China to play its opener in the San Francisco Bay area, which has a large Asian community.

"The decision was made for local marketing reasons by the Women's World Cup organising committee, based on the tremendous Chinese population in northern California and the interest we received from different Chinese organisations to bring the team to this venue," said Steve Vanderpool, vice president of communications for the Women's World Cup.

Germany is the top-seeded team in Group B, which also includes Brazil, Mexico and Italy. "The draw was held at half-time of a match won 2-1 by a squad of world all-stars against the U.S. national team.

Charmaine Hooper of Canada scored twice in the second half for the world all-stars. Julie Foudy scored the U.S. goal midway through the first half.

U.S. midfielder Michelle Akers left the game in the first half, her face bloodied, and was taken to a hospital after bumping heads with a world all-star player on a jump ball situation in front of the world all-stars' goal. She had a severe cut over her left eyebrow that was expected to need four stitches, and a bruised cheekbone.

Donna de Varona, chair of the organising committee for the Women's World Cup, asked fans for their support this June and July.

"Come this summer and fill the stadiums, and excite young girls all over the world," she said.

Blatter, head of soccer's world governing body, has said repeatedly that "the future of football is feminine" and said Sunday that female soccer players have a distinct advantage over their male counterparts.

"They don't cheat. They don't grip the shirt. They don't feign a foul," Blatter said. "It's not like the men, who lie on the field and are taken off the field on a stretcher, and 30 seconds later they're running faster than ever."

The Women's World Cup, being billed as the largest women-only sporting event in history, will have games in or near Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco/San Jose, Washington, D.C. and Portland, Ore.

The United States won the inaugural Women's World Cup in 1991 in China. Norway won the title in 1995 in Sweden.

Norway, under new coach Per-Mathias Hogmo, is considered the strongest challenger to the U.S. team. Hege Riise, the best player in the last Women's World Cup, is back to lead the Norwegians.

Israeli army demolishes three Palestinian homes

NABLUS (AFP) — The Israeli army demolished three Palestinian homes under construction in villages near this West Bank city on Monday because their owners lacked building permits, an army spokesman said.

Demolition equipment guarded by soldiers razed one home being built by Suleiman Bilawny, a farmer and a father of five, in 'Ain Shibli, a small village 17 kilometres east of Nablus.

Two other structures were demolished in Lubban Al Sharqiya, 15 kilometres south of Nablus, and in Beit Furik, four kilometres south of the city.

Peter Lerner, a spokesman

for the Israeli military, said the walls of the houses had been built without the necessary permits from Israeli authorities.

"Whenever there is building without a permit, it is up to the local authorities to handle the matter and we followed all the legal proceedings required," he told AFP.

No incidents were reported during the demolition.

Israel routinely destroys Palestinian homes in areas occupied by the Jewish state in 1967 on the grounds they were built without proper authorisation.

Palestinians counter that Israeli authorities rarely issue building permits for homes in

what Israel considers sensitive areas around occupied Jerusalem or near Jewish settlements and roads.

Palestinians, backed by the United States and Europe, have demanded a freeze on Israeli housing demolition in the occupied areas pending the outcome of negotiations on a permanent peace settlement between the two sides.

Such negotiations have been stalled since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu froze application of the latest interim peace agreement with the Palestinians in December, citing what he said were Palestinian violations of the accord.



AFGHANS MARK SOVIET WITHDRAWAL: Taleban soldiers Monday guard the shell of the building of the former Soviet House for Science and Culture on Darulaman street in Kabul on the 10th anniversary of the Soviet military withdrawal from Afghanistan (AFP photo)

Yemeni kidnapper admits to giving order to kill tourists

ZINJIBAR (AFP) — An Islamist militant on trial for kidnapping a group of western tourists in December admitted in court here on Monday that he gave orders to kill the hostages if there were a rescue operation.

Zin Al Abidin Al Mehdhar, better known as Abul Hassan, told the court in this southern town that he ordered his men "to kill only the men, and not the women, if Yemeni police intervened to free the hostages."

The trial opened Jan. 13 when Abul Hassan and two brothers were charged with the kidnapping in southern Yemen in which three Britons and an Australian died in a botched rescue operation.

Two more suspects — a Yemeni and a Tunisian — have since been brought to court. Under a law passed in August, they could face the death penalty if convicted of the Dec. 28 kidnapping.

All have been charged with kidnapping, resisting security forces, illegal possession of firearms and explosives, and setting up an armed group blamed for several attacks in south Yemen.

Also on Monday, Abul Hassan denied ordering a bomb attack on a hotel in the southern town of Aden or any link to Abu Hamza Al Masri, a British Islamist militant whom Sanaa is seeking to have extradited.

Judge Najib Kaderi, mean-

while, ruled out the use of evidence presented by the prosecution on procedural grounds, because a report was not filed as required when Abul Hassan's home was searched.

The trial was adjourned until Thursday.

Three of the kidnappers were killed in the rescue operation, launched after mediation efforts failed. A policeman also died in the firefight during which the hostages were used as human shields.

Yemeni authorities have linked the case to a separate trial in Aden of eight British Muslims and two Algerians accused of plotting a campaign of bomb attacks in the southern port city.

Russia denies report of arms deal with Iraq

MOSCOW (AP) — The Russian government on Monday angrily denied a British newspaper report that said Moscow had signed a contract to modernise Iraq's fighter jets and air defence systems.

"Russia fully and scrupulously fulfils its obligations under the United Nations' resolutions on Iraq," the government said in a statement.

Britain's Sunday Telegraph said the \$160 million deal to strengthen Iraq's air defences and upgrade squadrons of MiG fighters was signed in mid-January after a Moscow visit by Ahmad Khalil, Iraq's Transport and Communications Minister.

The newspaper claimed the decision to give Iraqi President Saddam Hussein military help

was approved by Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov on Dec. 7 in violation of a United Nations arms embargo on Iraq.

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov denied the report, and the government called it a "provocation."

The fabrications in the British media have clearly been initiated by those who try to cast a shadow on Russia's policy for political settlement of the Iraqi problem," the government statement said.

"Such fabrications, especially linked to names of Russia's top officials, recall methods of disinformation in the cold war times."

An official at the Sokol aircraft plant, a Russian company that manufactures MiG aircraft

and specialises in upgrading of MiG-21 and MiG-29 fighters, confirmed that Khalil had visited his plant. Iraq has planes of both types.

Alexander Savelyev, Sokol's deputy chief engineer, told The Associated Press that modernisation of Iraqi MiGs or any other military cooperation had not been on the agenda.

"We briefed the minister on our light civilian planes and gave him a ride in a hovercraft," Savelyev told The Associated Press. "We didn't discuss any military cooperation."

Other Russian officials also denied any military contacts with Iraq. Gen. Leonid Ivashov, who heads the Defence Ministry's cooperation with other governments, called the

British report a "premeditated provocation" and said the ministry strictly follows the government's policy on Iraq.

Two of Russia's major arms dealers, the state-run Rosvooruzheniye arms exporter and the MAPO-MiG company which produces the MiG fighter jets, also denied involvement.

Russia has harshly criticised the United States and Britain for recent air strikes on Iraq. Russia has pushed for an early lifting of the U.N. economic sanctions imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

At the same time, Moscow has urged Iraq to comply with the U.N. resolutions that require Iraq to dismantle its mass destruction weapons.

Tenders floated for first stage of refugee camp project

AMMAN (Petra) — The Palestinian Affairs Department announced Monday that it has floated tenders for consultancy services connected with government-sponsored social safety net in the Palestinian refugee camps.

Department Director Ibrahim Badran said the JD44 million first stage of the project entails developing and modernising the infrastructure services in the camps in a bid to improve the standard of living of their residents.

From this amount, JD24 million will be allocated for the construction of four wastewater treatment plants to serve the Azmi Mufti, Jerash, Taliyeh and Sukhneh camps, Badran said.

The execution of the projects is expected to start in the second half of this year.

Upgrading the infrastructure services in the camps is part of the government's JD698 million, two-stage infrastructure improvement plan for the Kingdom's less-developed areas. Stage I will be completed by 2001 at the cost of JD178 million and Stage II to be implemented between 2001 and 2008, will cost JD520 million.

The plan envisages improved services to 14 underdeveloped regions in addition to 13 refugee camps, Badran said, adding that several international organisations, including the World Bank, the German Development Bank, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Islamic Development Bank and the Italian government, have already contributed to the implementation of the plan through long-term soft loans.

According to Badran, the department has received encouraging responses from Arab and foreign countries about partially financing the scheme.

Condolence rep
in Dominican

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Policemen refused
amnesty in Biko

case

Georgian police
break up protest
supporting priest

Cholera kills 42 in
Zambian capital

27 die in Indian
bus accident

28 dead in Cote
d'Ivoire accident

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Concern over adding Reagan to Rushmore

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Plans to carve the face of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan into the Mount Rushmore monument has run into opposition from authorities who oversee the popular tourist destination, the Washington Post said Monday.

The South Dakota site already bears the colossal likenesses of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt and Thomas Jefferson. But now Republican Representative Matt Salmon of Arizona plans to submit a proposal to add Reagan to his colleagues in Congress on Feb. 25 and has circulated a letter asking for their support. "History has already vindicated Ronald Reagan's positions, and we should honour him appropriately for his achievements," Salmon says in his letter. The U.S. National Park Service says Salmon's plan — backed by Roscoe Bartlett of Maryland and John Kasich of Ohio — will not fly, because the mountainside is unstable and may not withstand any more drilling, the Post said. The Post said previous efforts to add former presidents Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy failed.

Islamists shoot cable operators

SRINAGAR (AFP) — Three cable television operators were shot and wounded in the northern Indian state of Kashmir on Monday as Islamists sought to enforce a ban on Western broadcasts, police said. The three owners of the small scale operations in the Kashmiri capital Srinagar, were all shot in the leg, a police official said. "One of them, Muzaffar Ahmad, was beaming television networks to some 10,000 households in and around Lal Bazar locality, on the city's outskirts," the official said. In a separate incident, Islamists also fired at and injured a video shop owner in the city who was in critical condition, the official said.

Israel, Croatia sign \$100 million jet deal

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel signed a \$100 million contract with Croatia Monday to upgrade Croatia's fleet of MiG-21 fighter jets, Israel Radio reported. The agreement was signed by Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens and his Croatian counterpart Pavlo Miljavac, who was on the second day of a three-day visit to Israel, it said. Croatia and Israel established diplomatic relations in September 1997 after Zagreb officially apologised for crimes committed against Jews by the pro-Nazi regime in Croatia during World War II. At the time, Israeli press reports said one motivating factor for Israel to normalise ties with Croatia despite unease over the wartime past of some of its leaders was to gain access to lucrative defence contracts as Zagreb seeks to modernise its armed forces.

Eight skinheads arrested following killing

COTTBUS (AFP) — Eight rightwing extremists, members of a gang of German skinheads, have been detained after they launched a manhunt that led to the death of an Algerian over the weekend, justice officials said Monday. Five suspects, aged 17 to 30, remained under arrest but three 18-year-olds were released due to lack of evidence. The detainees are believed to be a part of a gang of 18 skinheads from the eastern Guben region who attacked two Algerian nationals and a Sierra Leonean overnight Saturday. Algerian Omar Ben Noui, a 28-year-old asylum-seeker, died from injuries sustained after he jumped through a glass door while trying to escape the gang, cutting an artery in his leg.

Iran launches electronic newspaper

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran launched its first electronic daily newspaper on the Internet Monday dubbed Nation's House. The paper, run by the Iranian parliament's research and information centre, was officially inaugurated by house speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri, the official news agency IRNA reported. As well as providing daily accounts of parliamentary proceedings, the paper will also draw on the huge volume of research about Iran conducted for MPs.

Ben Laden still in Afghanistan — report

DUBAI (AFP) — Alleged "terrorist" mastermind Osama Ben Laden is still in Afghanistan in an area controlled by warring Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the Arabic daily Al Hayat said Monday.

The daily said Ben Laden had left the Taleban stronghold of Kandahar several days ago with 10 supporters, including the head of Egypt's Jihad group, Ayman Al Zawahri, and a dozen Taleban soldiers.

He "momentarily" stopped in a northern Afghan area controlled by Hekmatyar's Hezbi-Islami faction, the newspaper said, quoting "informed" Afghan sources.

Diplomatic sources in Kabul

and Pakistan have also said Ben Laden could still be in Afghanistan. Washington has accused him of masterminding last year's deadly U.S. embassy bombings in east Africa.

Hekmatyar, although part of an anti-Taleban alliance, has some supporters in northern Afghanistan province such as commander Bashir Baghlani who is now fighting for the Taleban.

But the daily quoted other sources as saying Ben Laden was seen last Wednesday in Jalalabad, in the east of the country, and that he was suffering kidney pain.

The Taleban, who control about four-fifths of Afghanistan, on Saturday said Ben Laden had

"disappeared" but did not say whether he had left the country.

Al Hayat quoted Egyptian Islamist sources as saying many Islamists linked to Ben Laden and Zawahri had left Afghanistan recently, anticipating U.S. pressure on the Taleban to hand over Ben Laden.

Zawahri is considered to be Ben Laden's right-hand man. He is currently being tried in absentia in Egypt as part of a trial of 107 people suspected of belonging to the Jihad group.

Ben Laden's disappearance has sparked widespread speculation over his whereabouts.

"The question is who would want him. It's a bit like trying to get rid of contaminated radioactive waste, nobody wants that kind of heat," said a Western military analyst who monitors the region.

"My reckoning is that he's somewhere in southern Afghanistan and for the Taleban not knowing where he is would suit them," he said.

Washington and London remain sceptical about the militia's claim that Ben Laden is missing.

But the military analyst said the militia had no reason to lie and added there were too many sources who could prove them wrong which would prove embarrassing.

One diplomatic source said Ben Laden travelling with

Zawahri would make sense given Ben Laden's close affiliation with Egyptians who were responsible for his security when he was based in the eastern Afghan province of Khost.

There have been suggestions that Ben Laden is attempting to get to Dubai or Iraq and had moved in with anti-Taleban militia.

But Afghan opposition political advisor Mohammad Eshaq said it was not likely Ben Laden was with any members of the anti-Taleban alliance, and a spokesman for anti-Taleban commander Ahmad Shah Masood laughed at the suggestion and accused the militia of propaganda.

One diplomatic source said Ben Laden travelling with

Labour Party chooses slate for parliamentary polls

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's main opposition Labour Party held primary elections Monday to choose the movement's slate of candidates for parliamentary elections on May 17.

Some 163,000 party members were eligible to vote for 83 candidates hoping to make it into the top 25-30 slots on the ticket with a realistic hope of gaining a seat in the Knesset.

Labour, the main opposition to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing Likud bloc, had 34 seats in the outgoing 120-member parliament.

The primaries were being conducted in 554 polling stations around the country and will close at 8:00 p.m. (1800 GMT).

Labour Party chairman and prime ministerial candidate Ehud Barak has already been given the top slot on the ticket, followed by his predecessor and party veteran Shimon Peres.

Four other positions among the top 10 have been reserved for politicians Barak hopes to woo into an electoral alliance, notably former foreign minister and Likud defector David Levy.

Most of the rest of the slate is to be determined in Monday's primary, during which each card-carrying Laborite can nominate nine to 11 candidates who will then be ranked according to the number of

votes received.

Barak has been quietly campaigning in favour of several associates he believes can help defeat Likud but who lack a strong base within the Labour rank-and-file, including former deputy military chief of staff Matan Vilnai, who only joined the party last month.

Several outgoing deputies were expected to find themselves pushed too far down the ticket to win reelection and they could respond by bolting to the new Centre Party running behind former Likud Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai.

Under an election law in effect since the previous national polls in 1996, Israelis cast two ballots — one for a party list running for parliament and one for the prime minister.

If no candidate for premier wins more than 50 per cent of the vote on May 17, the top two contenders — expected to be Barak and Netanyahu — will hold a run-off on June 1.

The system, allowing voters to split their ballots, has contributed to a multiplication of smaller parties running for parliament, with 56 groups signed up to contest this year's election — 21 more than in 1996.

A party list must receive at least 1.5 per cent of the total ballots cast, around 68,000 votes, to obtain a seat in parliament.

Cypriot police escape prosecution after beating up immigrants

NICOSIA (AFP) — Cypriot police who were filmed beating up illegal African immigrants in a holding cell are not to be prosecuted, although the inspector in charge of the operation will be charged with dereliction of duty, Cyprus Attorney General Alecos Markides said Monday.

The violence occurred in October when riot police

stormed holding cells in the southern town of Lamaca to quell a disturbance among the immigrants, kicking and clubbing the inmates. Footage of the riot was shown on television.

The Africans were among a group of immigrants who arrived in Cyprus in June, after being brought ashore from a Syrian-registered trawler that

had drifted for nine days without food or water.

Markides said the police could not be prosecuted because none of the officers could be identified individually, since they were all wearing masks against tear gas.

The inspector in charge of the operation, Haralambos Mavros, faces up to two years in prison if convicted.

Markides also announced that the 30 Nigerians involved in the incident were deported on Monday, accompanied by 50 policemen.

He said those injured during October's clash had been compensated financially, and had declared they had no further claim against the police.



IRAQ WARNS NEIGHBOURS OVER BASES: An armed British Tornado is readied Monday for a flight over the no-fly zones at an air base in a Persian Gulf country. Iraqi Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan said Monday his country was capable of inflicting 'significant damage' on Kuwaiti and Saudi bases used by British and U.S. planes. Speaking on Iraqi television, Ramadan called taking off from their bases. "If you do not have the will, and if the presence of the Americans and British on your territory was imposed on you, then Iraq will carry out its role and defend its people and its property," said Ramadan. Ramadan also said Iraq will attack the U.S. base in southeastern Turkey if its planes continue to overfly northern Iraq (AP photo)